NATION

Sexual abuse accused Delhi godman arrested

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WeWork to launch Rs 3,000 cr IPO on 3 October

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Kalyana K'taka reels under worst floods in 40 years

Riverbanks along the Bhima and Krishna rivers are overflowing, submerging highways, villages, and cutting off crucial transport routes *PHOTO: SALAR*

YOHAN P HONNADDI

KALABURAGI/BIDAR/ RAICHUR/YADGIR, 28 SEPT

Devastating floods triggered by relentless rainfall and massive inflows from Maharashtra's reservoirs have brought life to a standstill across several districts of Kalyana Karnataka. Riverbanks along the Bhima and Krishna rivers are overflowing, submerging highways, villages, and cutting off crucial transport routes. The region is witnessing one of its worst flood disasters in four decades.

Key national highway submerged, thousands stranded

In Kalaburagi, the overflowing Bhima River disrupted vehicular traffic on NH-50 near Kattisangavi (Jewargi taluk). Initially closed to heavy vehicles, the bridge was later completely submerged, halting all traffic — including ambulances and newspaper delivery. Passengers from Bengaluru, Hubballi, Belagavi, and Vijayapura were stranded and forced to cross the flooded bridge on foot, as no alternative transport was arranged. Long queues of trucks stretched for kilometres.

Kalaburagi Deputy Commissioner Fawzia Tarannum told Salar News that floodwaters from Kagina river and Nagavi stream had isolated Mudabul village from Chittapur taluk HQ, and that the Dandoti bridge was underwater. In Chincholi taluk, floodwaters entered over 90 homes in Jattur village, and 200 people were rescued. The Kagina bridge in Satapatanalli (Sedam taluk) was also submerged, cutting off links between Sedam–Chincholi and Chittapur–Kalgi.

The Bhima River received a massive inflow of 3.5 lakh cusecs, forcing the opening of all gates at Sonna Bhima barrage in Afzalpur taluk. Officials warned of a flood threat to 85 villages. As of Sunday evening, 6,664 people had been shifted to safer areas, and 41 relief centres were operational in Kalaburagi. *—Salar News*

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In NY, EAM snubs US over H1B and tariffs

NEW YORK, 28 SEPT

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said the world will need a global workforce and new trade arrangements would emerge amid shifting global dynamics. He said India was increasing its engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean to diversify economic ties. He said that all countries should build their capabilities for greater self-reliance during the turbulent times. Jaishankar's remarks come amid recent moves by the US to raise new H1B visa fees to USD 1,00,000, and impose an additional 25 per cent tariff on India as a penalty for its purchases of Russian oil, taking the total levies imposed on the country by America to 50 per cent. *—PTI*

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Skywalk near Kolar collapses as truck hits pillar

SALAR NEWS, 28 SEPT

A skywalk near Kondarajanahalli on the outskirts of Kolar city collapsed around midnight hours of Saturday, causing a massive traffic jam on the Bengaluru-Chennai National Highway for over five hours. Traffic police struggled to clear a three-kilometre-long queue on both sides. Police said the collapse occurred when a truck rammed one of the skywalk's supporting pillars. As it was late at night, no pedestrians were on the structure and there were no injuries, confirmed Nagarathnamma Traffic Sub-Inspector, Kolar. Traffic was gradually cleared, and normalcy was restored by 10 am on Sunday. The truck driver, initially reluctant to step down fearing public backlash, was persuaded by locals after assurances of his safety. Kolar rural police have registered a case and initiated an investigation into the incident. *—Salar News*

Vijay moves HC seeking CBI probe

2 of Vijay's aides booked as 40 dead; TVK gives Rs 20L aid, alleges DMK plot

KARUR/CHENNAI, 28 SEPT

Actor-politician Vijay's party, Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), has alleged a conspiracy by ruling DMK functionaries behind the stampede at their rally in Karur on Saturday, which left 40 people dead and nearly 100 injured. TVK has petitioned the Madras High Court, seeking a Special Investigation Team (SIT) or a CBI probe. The matter will be heard on Monday.

The stampede occurred at a rally attended by over 27,000 people, almost triple the venue's 10,000-person capacity, triggered by overcrowding, heat exhaustion, and Vijay's delayed arrival. Several attendees, including children, climbed roofs and trees to catch a glimpse of the actor, while many fainted due to lack of food and water during the day-long wait.

The victims include 10 children, 17 women, and 13 men. Over 60 are being treated in hospitals, with at least two in critical condition. Traders in Karur closed shops on Sunday as a mark of respect.

TVK has rejected allegations of violating safety guidelines and blamed the ruling DMK for orchestrating the chaos. The party cited CCTV footage and local sources pointing to a "criminal conspiracy".

Bereaved families mourn outside the Government Hospital in Karur, after a stampede at actor-politician Vijay's rally on Saturday claimed 40 lives. Relatives say their loved ones had gone just to catch a glimpse of the star *PHOTO: PTI*

Meanwhile, police have booked TVK leaders, including Vijay's close aide and general secretary N Anand, joint general secretary CT Nirmal Kumar, and Karur West district secretary Mathiyazhagan under charges of culpable homicide not amounting to murder, and negligent conduct.

Justice Aruna Jagadeesan, heading the state-appointed inquiry commission, visited hospitals and the stampede site. Chief Minister MK Stalin said any action would be based on the inquiry panel's findings and refused to politicise the tragedy.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced Rs 2 lakh ex gratia to families of the deceased and 50,000 to the injured. The Tamil Nadu government offered Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 lakh respectively. TVK announced Rs 20 lakh for each deceased's family and Rs 2 lakh for the injured. The Tamil Nadu Congress Committee pledged Rs 1 crore, and the BJP announced Rs 1 lakh for each bereaved family.

ADGP (Law & Order) S Davidson Devasirvatham confirmed 500 police personnel were deployed and denied claims of stone-pelting. He said crowd anxiety worsened due to Vijay's delayed arrival and lack of resources.

"As their (TVK) leader started the campaign behind the scheduled in the morning, he left Namakkal by 4.15pm and reached the venue at 6pm (in Karur). It was supposed to be a 30-minute journey. But it took almost 2 hours for him," he said.Some of them were travelling behind Vijay's vehicle and due to this, there was a further delay of an hour for them to reach the designated spot, he said. "It is at that time incident has occurred. We will investigate what led to the incident," he said. *—PTI*

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Whistleblower retracts D'sthala claims in court

MANGALURU, 28 SEPT

The whistleblower in the Dharmasthala case, currently imprisoned in Shivamogga, retracted his earlier claims during a voluntary statement recorded by the Additional Civil Judge and Judicial First Class Magistrate in Belthangady on Saturday.

The statement, admitted that allegations of multiple rapes, murders, and burials over two decades were false and made at the behest of unidentified individuals. The police withheld the names due to technical reasons.

The whistleblower also revealed that the skull presented as evidence on 11 July was handed to him by Soujanya's uncle, Vittala Gowda.

The Special Investigation Team (SIT), which had earlier arrested him on charges of perjury, continues to investigate the case. *—PTI*

Wangchuk's wife trashes 'Pak link'

Gitanjali Angmo and Sonam Wangchuk *PHOTO: X*

LEH/NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

Jailed activist Sonam Wangchuk's wife, Gitanjali Angmo, has dismissed allegations of 'Pakistan links' and financial irregularities against him.

Terming the charge that Wangchuk incited violence in Leh as 'misplaced,' she said he has been protesting in the 'most Gandhian way possible' and that the situation escalated on 24 September due to CRPF actions.

Wangchuk was arrested under the National Security Act (NSA) on Friday, two days after protests demanding Sixth Schedule status and statehood for Ladakh turned violent in Leh, leaving four dead and 90 injured.

He is lodged in Jodhpur prison. Angmo, co-founder of the Himalayan Institute of Alternative Learning (HIAL), said she has not been able to communicate with her husband and denied all allegations against him and their institutions.

Responding to claims of Pakistan links, Angmo clarified that their recent visit to Pakistan was purely professional and climate-focused, including a UN-organised 'Breathe Pakistan' conference. "All overseas visits were by invitation from reputed institutions. Sonam praised PM Modi at the event," she said, adding that his statements were misinterpreted.

Addressing financial irregularities, Angmo said HIAL receives payments for consulting assignments, does not charge students, and leaves technologies like ice stupas free for public use. She denied FCRA violations and explained delays in UGC registration and land allotment were administrative.

Angmo also questioned the use of NSA against Wangchuk, citing his record of peaceful protests, and said the 24 September unrest escalated only after CRPF fired tear gas. "He knew only about a peaceful protest," she said, stressing that Wangchuk advocates mindful development and local empowerment in Ladakh. *—PTI*

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Shah rejects ceasefire offer from Naxals

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday rejected the ceasefire offer extended by Maoists, stating that security forces would not fire a single bullet if the extremists choose to surrender and lay down their arms.

Addressing the valedictory session of a seminar on 'Naxal Mukt Bharat', Shah said, "Recently, a letter was written claiming past actions were mistakes and proposing a ceasefire. I want to clarify that there will be no ceasefire. If you want to surrender, lay down your arms. A red carpet welcome with a lucrative rehabilitation policy awaits you."

Amit Shah *PHOTO: PTI*

Shah hit out at Left parties for providing ideological support to Left Wing Extremism, dismissing claims that Maoist violence is due to lack of development. He said Naxalism had thrived because its ideology was nurtured by sections of society, which prevented development from reaching affected areas for decades.

"The fight against Naxalism will not end until we identify those providing ideological, legal, and financial support to the extremists," Shah said, adding that merely curbing killings is insufficient.

The minister referred to intensified security operations, including 'Operation Black Forest' along the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border, which eliminated several top Maoist leaders, prompting the ceasefire proposal.

Shah asserted that India would be free of Naxalism by 31 March, 2026, emphasising that surrendering extremists would be welcomed and rehabilitated, but any continuation of armed activity would face decisive action. *—PTI*

POOJA WITH PURPOSE

Bengaluru lights up with festive cheer as devotees flock to an education-themed Durga pooja pandal in Bengaluru's Jayamahal Extension on Sunday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

FROM PITCH TO POWER

Ex-Delhi captain Mithun Manhas to helm BCCI

MUMBAI, 28 SEPT

- Manhas succeeds former India cricketer Roger Binny, who resigned last month upon reaching 70, becoming the 37th president of India's cricket board.

Former Delhi captain Mithun Manhas was elected unopposed as the president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) during its 94th Annual General Meeting (AGM) at its headquarters here on Sunday. Alongside Manhas, key office-bearers, including secretary Devajit Saikia, retained their positions.

The 45-year-old Manhas succeeds former India cricketer Roger Binny, who resigned last month upon reaching 70, becoming the 37th president of India's cricket board. He is the third consecutive First-Class cricketer to hold the post after Binny and Sourav Ganguly.

Manhas, who played 157 First-Class, 130 List A, and 55 IPL matches between 1997-98 and 2016-17, emerged as the frontrunner following an informal meeting of the board's power brokers in New Delhi on 20 September. He has previously served as the director of a three-member ad-hoc committee managing the Jammu and Kashmir State Cricket Association (JKCA) amid allegations of mismanagement.

Boasting 9,714 First-Class runs, including 27 centuries, and 4,126 List A runs, Manhas said his experience as a player and administrator will guide his tenure. "It's an absolute honour to be the president of the world's finest cricket board. I give my assurance that I will be committed with dedication and passion," he said, highlighting his work with the JKCA as a key factor in his election.

The AGM also confirmed other appointments: Arun Dhumal retained his position as IPL Governing Council chairman, Raghuram Bhat became treasurer, and Rajeev Shukla continues as vice-president.

BCCI secretary Saikia said, "There was no contestant against any of the candidates for the apex council posts. They have been selected unopposed." *—PTI*

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PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD

City police arrest 8, recover ₹1.1 cr looted cash

BENGALURU, 28 SEPT

In a swift action, police have arrested eight robbers and recovered Rs 1.1 crore from an areca nut trader in the City, officials said. According to police, Motaram, 45 and his wife Laxmi Devi, both hailing from Rajasthan, had come to Hulimavu in a car to hand over the money to Hemant from Tumakuru on Saturday evening, when they were intercepted by two people posing as policemen, police said. The three people feeling suspicious fled the scene, where more people from the gang joined. They were later held in a shed and assaulted by the gang, where they stole their mobiles and asked for ransom, police said. The arrested are Narasimha, Jeevan, Kishore, Venkataraju, Chandiran, Kumar, Ravi Kiran, and Naman. *—PTI*

FIR against Hindu Jagaran Vedike head for assault

MANGALURU, 28 SEPT

Police have registered a case against Hindu Jagaran Vedike leader Samit Raj on charges of sexual assault and criminal intimidation after a woman alleged he obtained her intimate photographs and repeatedly assaulted her under threat of violence. The FIR was lodged at Bajpe police station in Dakshina Kannada district on Saturday, based on her written complaint. The woman claimed Raj had harassed her for the past 15 days, used photographs to intimidate her, and threatened to kill her when she resisted. "Based on the complaint and prima facie evidence, a case has been registered under the relevant provisions of the law. Investigation is underway," a Bajpe police said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: SALAR

Dasara dog show pulls massive crowds in Mysuru

MYSURU, 28 SEPT

The Cute Pets Show, held at JK Grounds as part of the Mysuru Dasara 2025 festivities, drew huge crowds on Sunday. Organised by the Raitha Dasara Sub-Committee, the event saw participation from hundreds of pet owners and featured 45 dog breeds, including desi favourites like Mudhol hounds and Rajapalayam, alongside exotic breeds like St Bernard, Chihuahua, and German Shepherd. Cats and lovebirds also featured. Prizes were awarded for best exotic and desi breeds based on charm and agility, judged by experts. Sick animals and those under the Wildlife Act were not permitted. Facilities included water and first aid. *—Salar News*

Communication Conclave: BEML bags 5 awards

BENGALURU, 28 SEPT

Defence PSU BEML Ltd on Sunday said it won five awards for its exceptional communication strategies at the 19th Global Communication Conclave, 2025, held in Goa. In a statement, BEML said the awards were in the categories of business communication leadership, content marketing, corporate partnership, table calendar, and corporate brochure. "These honours recognise BEML's impactful content-driven initiatives, including its new brand identity, change communication, thought leadership, digital-first approach, strong media relations, and innovative communication strategies," it said, highlighting the company's focus on strategic and creative engagement. *—PTI*

The flooding submerged bridges on roads leading to Pratappur, Khanapur, Gaur, Janapur, and Betabalkunda, disrupting vehicular movement

PHOTO: SALAR

Rains batter Kalyana K'taka, roads cut off

CM orders relief operations as Krishna and Bhima rivers flood region

YOHAN P HONNADDI
BIDAR/YADGIR, 28 SEPT

Floodwaters continue to wreak havoc in North Karnataka, with Bidar district isolated after key bridges collapsed and roads sank following heavy rains and increased water release from Maharashtra's Dhanegaon reservoir. Critical routes in Kamalnagar, Aurad, Bhalki, Hulsur, and Basavakalyan remain submerged, cutting off links with neighbouring Maharashtra. The Inchur bridge in Bhalki taluk is underwater, blocking vital connections.

In Basavakalyan, water from the Tripurant Lake was diverted through the sluice, flooding agricultural fields and parts of the town. "Our staff are stationed near the sluice point, and surveillance is ongoing at vulnerable locations," said Jagannath Reddy, Commissioner of the Basavakalyan Development Authority.

The flooding submerged bridges on roads leading to Pratappur, Khanapur, Gaur, Janapur, and Betabalkunda, disrupting vehicular movement. A cooking gas transport vehicle was stranded between Chimkod and Chillargi.

BJP MLA Sharanu Salagar, waist-deep in floodwaters, released a video urging the state government to survey the damage and provide compensation to affected farmers.

Yadgir district receives 122% excess rainfall

The Yadgir Deputy Commissioner's Office reported that between September 22–28, the district received 93 mm of rainfall, 122 per cent above normal.

- 1,160 people were evacuated,
- 5 relief centres set up,
- 104 homes damaged,
- 22 livestock killed due to collapsed walls.

Shahapur taluk witnessed major power outages and a lack of drinking water. Over 150 houses were impacted. In Hurasagundgi, 50 homes were flooded; in Naykal village, backwaters surrounded 8 houses. In Wadagera taluk, submersion of the Bridge-cum-Barrage near Gudur disrupted access to Bendebembli, Joladadagi, and Bilhara.

In Hunasagi taluk, 22 cattle perished, while in Raichur's Maski, 15 houses collapsed. With the Bhima river joining the Krishna, the Jurala reservoir in Andhra Pradesh was opened as a precaution.

Govt responds

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah held an emergency review on Sunday, ordering Deputy Commissioners and Zilla Panchayat CEOs to visit affected areas and begin immediate relief efforts. He instructed Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda and Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh to supervise relief work on the ground.

Senior officials from the Rural Development Department and Water Resources Department were directed to assess the damage and ensure prompt support. "Precautionary measures must be taken to prevent loss of life and livestock. Relief centres must be fully equipped," Siddaramaiah said.

Meanwhile, Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy called for uninterrupted relief operations across flood-hit districts. In a post on X, he urged that relief centres be opened in every affected taluk with essential supplies like food, water, blankets, and medicines readily available.

He also demanded special care for children and the elderly, converting schools and hostels into temporary shelters. "Livestock are also suffering. Fodder and veterinary care must be delivered urgently," he said, assuring full support from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. *—Salar News*

FLOOD IMPACT (AS OF 28 SEPT):

KALABURAGI:
6,664 displaced;
41 relief centres;
85 villages under threat.

Yadgir:
1,160 displaced;
104 houses damaged;
5 relief centres;
22 livestock dead.

Bidar:
Infrastructure damage, bridge submersions, roads cut off in 5 taluks.

Raichur:
15 houses collapsed as Krishna river swells.

Tech glitches hit caste survey in Mysuru

MYSURU, 28 SEPT

Technical issues have disrupted the ongoing social and educational survey being conducted by the Backward Classes Commission in Mysuru, the home district of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

Deputy Commissioner G Lakshmikanth Reddy and ZP CEO S Ukeshkumar made a surprise inspection of villages including Bugathahalli and Vajamangala on Sunday to assess progress. Their visit comes amid complaints of server slowdowns, mobile network issues, and data upload problems hampering enumerators' efforts.

Launched on 22 September, the survey aims to cover 12.64 lakh families across twin districts, with 10.12 lakh in Mysuru district alone. However, enumerators have managed to reach only a few thousand families so far, well behind the target ahead of the 7 October deadline.

Enumerators are using a 60-point mobile app-based questionnaire to collect socio-economic data. However, locked houses, vacant rental properties, and residents refusing to share details such as Aadhaar and ration card numbers are further slowing progress. Issues with mapping houses via electricity RR numbers and residents relocating after stickers were affixed have also caused confusion. One enumerator in Gayathripuram told Salar News she manages to cover only one to five houses daily due to reluctance from residents and technical snags.

The DC verified that enumerators were going door-to-door and uploading data. *—Salar News*

Jayanagar to soon get piped natural gas

BENGALURU, 28 SEPT

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya inaugurated the piped natural gas (PNG) pipeline work in Jayanagar on Sunday, starting at the SBI Colony in JP Nagar 1st Phase.

The initiative marks a major move towards cleaner, safer, and more affordable energy for city households.

Speaking at the event, Surya highlighted that families could save Rs 200 to Rs 300 per LPG cylinder by switching to PNG, which is also considered safer than conventional LPG.

He further noted that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, efforts are underway to achieve 100 per cent PNG coverage in Bengaluru. Currently, residents in Bommanahalli and BTM constituencies are already benefiting from piped gas connections.

The project cost for PNG installation at SBI Layout is estimated between Rs 1.5 and Rs 2 crore, with GAIL responsible for the complete setup. *—Salar News*

DURGA POOJA

People visit an educational themed Durga pandal at Jayamahal Extension, in Bengaluru on Sunday. Durga Pooja festivities began on 28 September and will go on till 2 October

PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD

DNA confirms BJP leader's son fathered child in rape case

MANGALURU, 28 SEPT

Police on Sunday said a DNA test has confirmed that Krishna J Rao, son of BJP leader and Puttur city municipal council member PG Jagannivas Rao, is the biological father of a child at the centre of a rape and cheating case.

The case involves allegations that Krishna Rao, an engineering student, sexually assaulted a former classmate after promising to marry her. The woman gave birth on 28 June this year. Investigators said the DNA confirmation will serve as crucial evidence when the case goes to trial.

Rao was arrested on 5 July under provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) relating to repeated rape and sexual intercourse obtained under false promise of marriage. His father was also arrested for allegedly helping him evade the police.

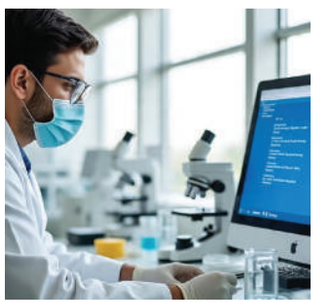


PHOTO: FREEPIK

- According to complaint, Rao and the woman had known each other since school.

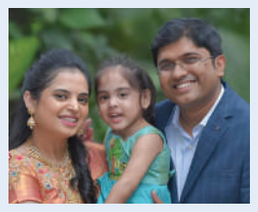
State High Court granted Krishna Rao bail on 3 September, observing that the relationship 'appeared consensual,' while noting that the charges would be fully tested at trial. Police said they have completed their investigation and filed a chargesheet.

> **There is no compulsion to disclose all personal details. People should answer only suitable questions. The Congress is using this survey for political purposes, to cancel ration cards and cut schemes as there is no money in the treasury**
>
> -R Ashoka, Opposition leader

Officials added that the DNA report significantly strengthens the prosecution's case.

According to the complaint, Rao and the woman had known each other since school. She alleged that he established physical relations in late 2024 after assuring her of marriage.

When she became pregnant, his family initially consented to the marriage but later refused, prompting her family to approach the police. *—PTI*



NRIs from US donate ₹5L for Cauvery Aarti

BENGALURU, 28 SEPT

The recently launched Cauvery Aarti programme, celebrated for its cultural and spiritual significance, has garnered widespread appreciation across State, India, and internationally. Among its admirers are Jyothi and her husband Vikas, originally from the City and now residing in Phoenix, USA, who have contributed Rs 5 lakh.

The couple, both engineers, expressed their deep connection to the River Cauvery.

"We grew up drinking the waters of the Kaveri and now, watching the historic Aarti at Brindavan Gardens near KRS from afar, we were moved beyond words," they shared.

Highlighting the river's vital role in sustaining millions, especially farmers, they praised the government for institutionalising this ritual of worship and reverence. "Mother Kaveri is inseparable from the life of the people of Karnataka."

They further emphasised that reverence for the river should extend beyond the Dasara festival and be observed throughout the year, noting, "God is nature, and nature itself is Kaveri. Worshipping her brings prosperity to all living beings." *—Salar News*

17% OF TOTAL SALES

Karnataka tops nationwide IMFL sales

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

South Indian states dominated nation's Indian-Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) sales in FY25, accounting for 58 per cent of total revenue, with Karnataka retaining the top national position by contributing 17 per cent of pan-India volumes, according to industry body CIABC.

The five southern states, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, along with Union Territory Puducherry, consumed 23.18 crore cases of IMFL in FY25.

Karnataka led with 6.88 crore cases, followed by Tamil Nadu at 6.47 crore. Telangana and Andhra Pradesh accounted for 3.71 crore and 3.55 crore cases, while Kerala recorded 2.29 crore. Puducherry saw a 10 per cent rise with 0.28 crore cases.

Karnataka led with 6.88 crore cases, followed by Tamil Nadu at 6.47 crore

PHOTO: X

CIABC Director General Anant S Iyer attributed slower pan-India growth to a weak Q1, affected by general elections and excise policy issues in several states. "Excise policy changes and state levy hikes continue to impact volumes in the short to medium term," he said.

- The five southern states, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, along with Union Territory Puducherry, consumed 23.18 crore cases of IMFL in FY25.

Despite these challenges, southern states reported nearly 1 per cent growth in IMFL sales, with premium and luxury segments, particularly whiskies, witnessing strong demand. North India contributed 20 per cent, led by Uttar Pradesh, while the western region accounted for 12 per cent, with Maharashtra topping the list at 2.71 crore cases.

The eastern region contributed 10 per cent, with West Bengal leading at 1.49 crore. Sales in Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir fell by 20 per cent and 15 per cent, respectively.

Iyer said companies are increasingly experimenting with premium whiskies, rums, and vodkas, adding that India remains the largest whisky market globally, with continued trends of premiumisation. *—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Kerala CM releases Raj Bhavan's official magazine

T'PURAM, 28 SEPT

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Sunday released the first edition of Rajahams, the official quarterly magazine of the Raj Bhavan, in the presence of Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar. Vijayan clarified that the government does not endorse all views expressed in its articles, citing one on Article 200 as the author's personal opinion. Stressing the value of dissent in a democracy, he hoped the publication would document key discussions and events at the Raj Bhavan. Praising the Governor's initiative and admiration for Kerala, he highlighted the state's tradition of coexistence. The first copy was received by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor. Notably, the controversial Bharat Mata portrait was absent, amid ongoing tensions. *—PTI*

Security forces foil infiltration bid in Jammu & Kashmir

SRINAGAR, 28 SEPT

Security forces on Sunday foiled an infiltration bid along the Line of Control (LoC) in the Keran sector of Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district. Troops detected suspicious movement and challenged the intruders, sparking a brief exchange of fire. Defence officials said two infiltrators are believed to have been killed, though their bodies have not yet been recovered due to rugged terrain and ongoing firing. Additional troops have been deployed to block escape routes as the search continues. The Keran sector, a sensitive stretch often targeted for cross-border infiltration has been under heightened surveillance, with such attempts rising before winter. An encounter broke out during an Army search in Kishtwar's Keshwan forest. *—PTI*

Centre trying to put Chhath Puja in UNESCO's list: PM

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said the government is working to have Chhath Mahaparva included in UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List. In his Mann Ki Baat broadcast, he noted that Kolkata's Durga Puja had earlier gained this recognition through similar efforts. Modi described Chhath, celebrated a few days after Diwali, as a sacred festival dedicated to the Sun God, where devotees offer prayers to both the setting and rising sun. Originating in Bihar, the festival is now observed across India and worldwide. He stressed that global recognition of such traditions would allow people everywhere to experience their grandeur and spiritual significance, while also keeping alive the cultural heritage of the country. *—PTI*

GST rate cut benefits did not reach people: Cong

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

The Congress on Sunday cited a media report which claimed that the prices of several products were hiked by big firms before the GST rate reduction and asked why the benefits of the cuts did not reach the public. Congress General Secretary in charge of communications, Jairam Ramesh, shared a media report on X which said that the Centre reduced the GST rate on food items from 12 per cent to 5 per cent from 22 September, and consumers should have benefited directly from this, but the reality is quite the opposite. Ramesh said it was not "bachat utsav (savings festival)" but "chapat utsav (fleecing festival)" that had been ushered in. *—PTI*

Bereaved family members and relatives of victims of the stampede mourn outside the mortuary at the Government Hospital in Karur district in Tamil Nadu; Relatives stand by the bodies of the deceased in a hospital; Rows of footwear and torn flags lie at the site of the stampede in Karur on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

TN cops say TVK leadership defied orders

Victims demand suspension of rallies; Eyewitness say Vijay ignored pleas for help

CHENNAI, 28 SEPT

Tamil Nadu police on Sunday accused the leadership of actor-politician Vijay's party, Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), of defying official instructions during the Karur rally on Saturday, where a stampede claimed 40 lives and left nearly 70 injured.

Police reject stone-pelting claims, criticise organisers

Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) Davidson Devasirvatham dismissed TVK's claim that stone-pelting triggered the stampede, confirming no such incident occurred. He stated organisers ignored police advice to hold the speech in a less crowded area. "There was no light inside Vijay's bus, so the crowd couldn't see him and began moving along with the bus," Devasirvatham explained.

The chaos erupted around 9 pm when panic spread rapidly, with many fainting and some climbing roofs or trees, only to fall and sustain injuries. Police had to resort to baton charges to control the crowd, which pushed aside barricades and created enclosed spaces. The narrow venue, overcrowded with around 27,000 attendees despite a capacity of 10,000, intensified the situation.

Police deployment and crowd control

Devasirvatham outlined police deployment standards for public gatherings, noting

KARUR STAMPEDE

Police personnel stand guard outside TVK chief Vijay's residence in Chennai, Tamil Nadu on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

nearly 500 officers, including senior officials, were present at the rally. He highlighted that depending on crowd density and risk category, the ratio of police to attendees varies, with tighter security for high-risk events.

Despite these measures, the organisers reportedly refused a police directive to have Vijay stop 50 metres from the speaking spot to address the crowd. "They insisted on proceeding to the designated spot, refusing to cooperate," the ADGP said.

Victims seek court intervention

A man injured in the stampede has petitioned the Madras High Court, urging the Tamil Nadu DGP to suspend permission for any further public meetings by Vijay until a full investigation is completed and safety protocols are ensured. The petitioner also sought to join the TVK's existing petition that requests police clearance for Vijay's political campaigns across the state until December.

Eyewitnesses detail causes of the tragedy

Eyewitnesses cited a power outage, sudden crowd surges, and limited space as critical factors leading to the disaster. Vijay arrived seven hours late, causing the crowd to swell further. As his campaign bus moved through the packed venue, people climbed trees and power lines, forcing authorities to cut electricity to prevent electrocution.

Witnesses described people pushing and throwing slippers at the bus to get Vijay's attention, with many falling into drains or fainting amid the crush. Ambulances struggled to reach those trapped in the mass. Police responded with baton charges to disperse the crowd.

One eyewitness accused Vijay of ignoring pleas for help, stating, "If Vijay had just waved while passing, the crowd wouldn't have followed him. People were screaming for help, but he ignored their cries."

The tragedy has raised serious questions about crowd management and event organisation at political rallies in Tamil Nadu. *—Agencies*

> **The Commission will speak to the affected individuals and submit its report. Based on its recommendations, the Chief Minister will take suitable action**
>
> -Udhayanidhi Stalin, Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister

Govt should have enhanced security at TVK meet: EPS

KARUR, 28 SEPT

Former Chief Minister and AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami on Sunday claimed that the stampede at the TVK's political rally here showed evidence of security lapse on the part of the police and the DMK government.

The police should have reviewed and strengthened the security arrangements based on the crowd that attended the TVK meetings in the past and depending on the prevailing situation at Karur meeting. Even the government and TVK leadership should have bestowed thought on the security arrangements, he said.

The AIADMK leader who earlier visited the Karur GH to meet those injured in the stampede, said a political leader should keenly observe the crowd and rectify the lapses and be prepared for the meeting. The previous AIADMK government took sufficient precaution when political meetings were held. *—PTI*

2-YR-OLD AMONG VICTIMS IN STAMPEDE

CHENNAI, 28 SEPT

Two-year-old Dhuru Vishnu the youngest one was among the victims of a stampede at actor-politician Vijay's rally in Karur. His aunt recounted that he had cried and clung to her before they decided to take him along. "As soon as Vijay came, they cut off the electricity supply. People could not hear him, so everyone tried to move closer to the bus. We cannot blame Vijay for the incident. It was our mistake," she said. Vishnu's father also urged others to avoid taking children to crowded events. Heart-wrenching images of parents surfaced on social media. *—PTI*

Curfew remains in Leh; Mobile internet suspended

LEH, 28 SEPT

Curfew remained in force in this violence-hit town for the fifth consecutive day on Sunday, with Lt Governor Kavinder Gupta set to hold a security review meeting to take a call on the relaxation in the restrictions, officials said.

The curfew was imposed on 24 September following widespread protests during a shutdown called by the Leh Apex Body (LAB) to advance talks with the Centre on the demands for statehood and extension of the Sixth Schedule to Ladakh.

It was for the first time relaxed for four hours on 27 September Saturday.

Four persons were killed and scores of others injured in the violence, while over 50 persons were taken into custody for their alleged involvement in rioting. Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk was also detained and lodged in Jodhpur jail in Rajasthan.

Security personnel stand guard as mortal remains of a man killed during recent protests are being taken for his last rites in Leh on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

Mobile internet services in the town remained suspended, while prohibitory orders banning assembly of five or more persons also remained in force in other major parts of the Union Territory including Kargil. Security

Two councillors, Smanla Dorje Nurbo and Phutsog Stanzin Tsepak along with two others were sent to police custody. The rest were remanded to judicial custody. Meanhwhile, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged that Ladakh's people, culture, and traditions were under attack by the BJP and RSS. *—PTI*

India-Russia relations are independent of Indo-US ties: Russian Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, 28 SEPT

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has reaffirmed that Russia respects India's independent foreign policy led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stating that India's relationships with the US or other nations are not benchmarks for India-Russia relations.

Speaking at a press conference following his address to the UN General Assembly, Lavrov asserted the importance of the "particularly privileged strategic partnership" between India and Russia. "These situations might arise between India and the United States... I can't consider them a criteria for relations between India and Russia," he said, referencing India's ongoing imports of Russian oil amid US pressure to reduce such purchases.

Lavrov highlighted the recent meeting between PM Modi and President Vladimir Putin at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in China, revealing that Putin is expected to visit New Delhi in December. He noted, "We have a very extensive bilateral agenda... and of course, close coordination at the international level."

In his discussions with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Lavrov remarked on India's autonomy in decision-making regarding oil imports, saying, "They are perfectly capable of making these decisions for themselves." He added that India's economic partnership with Russia remains secure, stating, "India chooses its own partners."

Jaishankar had discussions with Lavrov on topics that included bilateral ties, developments in the Middle East and the Ukraine conflict. *—PTI*

Nitish govt needs Rs 7L cr to fulfil promises: Tejashwi

PATNA, 28 SEPT

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav has claimed that the Nitish Kumar government will be unable to fulfill its election promises, estimating the cost to the exchequer at an astonishing Rs 7 lakh crore. Speaking to reporters, Yadav accused the ruling party of merely imitating his previous proposals: "They have announced so many sops in view of the upcoming polls. It would cost the exchequer a staggering Rs 7 lakh crore. They do not have enough revenue to fulfil the promises."

Describing the Nitish Kumar administration as "copycat," Yadav stated, "We, however, have a backup plan to outsmart the ruling NDA. We will reveal our cards once elections are announced and the model code of conduct is in place."

He also played a video clip of Prime Minister Modi criticising the Bihar government over corruption. *—PTI*

MANN KI BAAT

Selfless service is RSS' strength: Modi

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday praised the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) for its selfless service and discipline, and said 'nation first' is always supreme in every action of its volunteers.

In his Mann Ki Baat address, Modi said the journey of RSS, established by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in 1925, has been as remarkable and unprecedented as it is inspiring.

Modi also praised Hedgewar's successor M S Golwalkar and said his statement that "this is not mine, this belongs to the nation" inspires people to rise above self-interest and embrace dedication to the nation.

The RSS, which will turn 100 on Vijayadashmi next week, is considered the ideological inspiration for the ruling BJP.

PM Narendra Modi said that the RSS volunteers are the first to respond when a natural disaster strikes the country *PHOTO: X/NARENDRA MODI*

When the Sangh was founded, the country had been bound by the chains of slavery for centuries, Modi said. The world's oldest civilisation was being made to face an identity crisis.

RSS volunteers are the first to reach when a natural disaster strikes anywhere in the country, he noted.

Modi urged people to buy a khadi item on Gandhi Jayanti and honour the hard work of artisans.

Modi also said the government is working towards getting the 'Chhath' festival included in the UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

On account of similar efforts by the government, he said, Kolkata's Durga Puja also became a part of this UNESCO list.

During the broadcast, the prime minister also spoke with women navy officers -- Lieutenant Commander Dilna and Lieutenant Commander Roopa -- for exemplifying true courage and unshakable resolve during the Navika Sagar Parikrama, a sailing expedition to circumnavigate the globe.

He lauded their efforts and said women are making their presence feld in every fied in the country. *—PTI*

EC to deploy 470 observers for Bihar polls, bypolls

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

- Police and expenditure observers are deployed during polls to serve as eyes and ears of the election watchdog.

The Election Commission (EC) will deploy 470 officers as its observers for the upcoming assembly elections in Bihar and seven assembly bypolls to ensure a level playing field in the electoral contest.

In a statement on Sunday, the poll authority said out of the 470, 320 are IAS officers, 60 are IPS and 90 are from other services. General, police and expenditure observers are deployed during elections to serve as eyes and ears of the election watchdog.

A briefing of these observers is scheduled here on 3 October, a day before the EC visits Bihar to review poll preparedness there. The term of the 243-member Bihar assembly ends on 22 November and polls are likely to take place in November.

According to the statement, the Observers work under the superintendence, control and discipline of the Commission for the period from their appointment until the election process is completed. They act as the eyes and ears of the Commission and keep reporting to it periodically and as required.

—Agencies

PHOTO: X

Hoax bomb threat triggers panic at Jammu airport

JAMMU, 28 SEPT

The authorities at Jammu Airport on Sunday conducted a full anti-sabotage drill after a private airliner received a bomb threat email, officials said. Nothing suspicious was found during a thorough search by the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and police, and air traffic remained unaffected, the officials added. "An email was received by a private airliner this morning. A security drill was carried out to rule out the presence of any explosive substance. The email was found to be a hoax," an Airport Authority of India official said.He added that a police complaint has been lodged, and further investigation is underway to identify the sender of the email.*—PTI*

5 killed, 10 injured in road accident in Uttar Pradesh

LAKHIMPUR KHERI, 28 SEPT

At least five people, including a two-year-old child, were killed and 10 others seriously injured on Sunday when a van collided head-on with a state roadways bus in Kheri town, police said.The van, carrying about 15 passengers, crashed into a bus traveling in the opposite direction, officials added. Two of the deceased were identified as the van driver, Sunil, 25, from Pipariya village, and Sarafraj from Dateli village. Seven seriously injured passengers were immediately transferred to Lucknow for treatment, while three others are being treated at the district hospital. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath condoled the loss of lives in the accident and expressed concern over the injured.*—PTI*

Oldest person in Mizoram dies at 108

AIZWAL, 28 SEPT

Mizoram's oldest person, Lalneihsangi, died at a hospital in Aizawl due to age-related ailments, her family said. She was 108. Fondly called 'Pi Buangi' by locals, she passed away at Ebenezer Medical Centre on 27 September. Her funeral was held at her residence in Aizawl's Khatla locality on Sunday. Lalneihsangi was declared the oldest person in the state by Social Welfare Minister Lalrinpuii on 13 September. Born and raised in Aizawl, she celebrated her 108th birthday on 14 April. She had worked at Behala Girls Home in Kolkata, becoming the first Mizo known to serve in a rehabilitation centre. She was also honoured with the 'Women of Substance' Award for her contributions to society.*—PTI*

Posters target NSS Gen Secy over Sabarimala

PATHANAMTHITTA, 28 SEPT

More posters targeting Nair Service Society (NSS) General Secretary G Sukumaran Nair over his remarks on the Sabarimala issue appeared in parts of this South Kerala district on Sunday. The posters, spotted in Thiruvalla and Peringara, were issued under the banner of 'Save Nair Forum.' They carried an image from the film Baahubali, showing Kattappa stabbing the protagonist, with a message alleging that Nair had backstabbed Ayyappa devotees by supporting the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government. Nair had said he trusted the LDF to preserve rituals at the Sabarimala shrine. His statement triggered discontent across the Nair community. Nair reiterated he had no political stance.*—PTI*

Global workforce needed: EAM on H1B fee hike row

Pak's reaction is admission of cross-border terrorism, says India

NEW YORK, 28 SEPT

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said the world will increasingly require a global workforce and new trade arrangements would emerge despite uncertainties, as he underscored India's expanding engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean to diversify economic ties amid shifting global dynamics.

Speaking at an Observer Research Foundation (ORF) panel on the sidelines of the 80th UN General Assembly session here on27 September, he said trade would "continue to find a way" despite uncertainties.

"We will see new trade arrangements, technology, connectivity, and workplace models, making the global landscape very different in a short time," Jaishankar said.

The minister stressed that in "this turbulent atmosphere", particularly for large countries, it is important to build capacities for greater self-reliance.

"That is very much the focus in India today. Technology, self-reliance, multipolarity, and South-South cooperation are all part of one basket," he said.

Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during a meeting with his Saudi Arabian counterpart Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud in New York *PHOTO: PTI*

Jaishankar's remarks come amid recent moves by the US to raise new H1B visa fees to USD 100,000, and impose an additional 25 per cent tariff on India as a penalty for its purchases of Russian oil, taking the total levies imposed on the country by America to 50 per cent.

Indians account for nearly 71 per cent (over 2.8 lakh) of all H1B visas, followed by Chinese professionals with around 11.7 per cent or over 46,600.

Meanwhile, India has slammed Pakistan for responding to Jaishankar's UN General Assembly remarks on terrorism, despite the neighbour not being named, describing Islamabad's reaction as an admission of its "longstanding practice of cross-border terrorism". Jaishankar had said that major international terrorist attacks were traced back to a neighbour that was an epicentre of global terrorism. UN's designated lists of terrorists are replete with its nationals The Pakistani delegate accused India of attempting to "malign Pakistan" with "malicious accusations" about terrorism. *—PTI*

Commuters struggle to move amid heavy overnight rainfall in Mumbai in Maharashtra *PHOTO: PTI*

Rains lash M'rashtra; 2 dead in Marathwada

MUMBAI, 28 SEPT

Heavy rains occurred in several parts of Maharashtra, killing two in Marathwada and waterlogging in several places.

Amid a 'red alert' warning, Mumbai was lashed by heavy overnight rains, with the intensity easing by early Sunday morning. South Mumbai received over 100 mm rainfall in the last 24 hours. Local train services were delayed and

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation mobilised emergency response teams across the city.

The civic body's storm water drain department was maintaining a constant vigil to pump out the accumulated water in low-lying areas, it said.

A red alert was issued in Raigad, Thane and Palghar districts on Sunday.

Meanwhile, heavy rains in Maharashtra's Marathwada region led to the death of two persons in Dharashiv and the evacuation of over 3,500 persons from inundated areas in the district. Heavy rains continued in Beed, Nanded and Parbhani, which are also reeling under floods.

Moreover, heavy rain is likely to mar the Dussehra celebrations in Sikkim this, with rains being predicted in the next few days. *—PTI*

Godman Chaitanyananda Saraswati, being taken away by police after his arrest from Agra on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

Sexual abuse accused Delhi godman arrested

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

A Delhi court has remanded 62-year-old self-styled godman Chaitanyananda Saraswati to five days in police custody following allegations of sexual harassment involving 17 female students from a private institute. He was apprehended at a hotel in Agra and brought before the court by Duty Magistrate Ravi at 3.40pm.

Prosecutors accused Saraswati of molesting several women, demanding sexual favours, and making threats. "CCTV cameras were installed to monitor their movement – some were installed in bathrooms. Around 16 girls have complained," the prosecution stated, urging the need for custodial interrogation to confront him with witness statements and digital evidence.

Saraswati's defence opposed police custody, claiming that all statements had been recorded and said he suffers from diabetes and anxiety. The prosecution sought custody, citing risks of tampering and noted that Saraswati had withdrawn over Rs 50 lakh following the FIR, with police freezing Rs 8 crore linked to him. *—PTI*

SC raps HC for denying bail to 71-year-old woman in fraud case

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

The Supreme Court of India has intervened on behalf of a 71-year-old woman, Usha Mishra, who was denied bail by the Allahabad High Court in a forgery case involving a 1971 land sale deed in Uttar Pradesh. Justices Surya Kant, Ujjal Bhuyan, and N Kotiswar Singh issued a bailable warrant for the complainant, lawyer Daduram Shukla, directing him to appear and explain why he should not face exemplary costs for filing the FIR in 2023, alleging forgery.

The bench described the High Court's rejection of Mishra's anticipatory bail as "illogical," asserting, "It is quite unfortunate... and she is neither seller nor purchaser nor a witness or beneficiary of the sale deed." The court expressed concern over the "casual manner" in which the High Court handled the case, stating, "the impugned order has been passed warrants introspection."

The bench instructed the police to produce the original case records and quash proceedings deemed an "abuse of process."

The case against Mishra, who was allegedly linked to a gang involved in fabricating sale deeds, is set for further hearing on 8 October. *—PTI*

3 Naxalites gunned down in Chhattisgarh

KANKER, 28 SEPT

Three Naxalites were shot dead in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district on Sunday, police confirmed. The fire fight erupted in the Ravas forest along the Kanker–Gariaband border during a joint anti-Naxal operation involving District Reserve Guard personnel from both districts.

Arms were recovered from the scene, and police said area committee members of the Maoists were among the dead. Intermittent exchanges of fire were continuing.

This brings the toll of Naxalites killed in Chhattisgarh this year to 252, with the majority in the Bastar division. Earlier this month, two senior Central Committee leaders of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) were also eliminated in Narayanpur district. *—PTI*

Zubeen's family seeks CID probe

GUWAHATI, 28 SEPT

The family of Assamese cultural icon Zubeen Garg, who died by drowning in Singapore on 19 September, has lodged a complaint with the state Criminal Investigation Department (CID) demanding a thorough inquiry into the circumstances of his death.

The complaint, sent by email on Saturday, was signed by Garg's uncle Manoj Kumar Borthakur, his wife Garima, and sister Palme Borthakur. "We want a thorough probe into the circumstances of his death," Borthakur said.

A senior police officer confirmed receipt of the complaint, adding that the CID's special investigating team (SIT) is already examining the case. "The family's complaint will also be taken up with the SIT," he said.

On Sunday, the SIT visited Garg's residence in Kahilipara here to meet his family. Officers recorded their statements as part of the ongoing investigation.

The Assam police also began a separate probe against event manager Shyamkanu Mahanta, an accused in singer Zubeen Garg's death, for his alleged involvement in organised financial crimes. *—PTI*

UP to act against mischief in festivals

BALARAMPUR, 28 SEPT

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has issued a strong warning against attempts to disturb peace during the festive season, vowing consequences that "future generations will remember".

Speaking after inaugurating development projects, Adityanath declared that the idea of Ghazwa-e-Hind would "never take root in India", adding that those seeking to create anarchy in its name would earn a "one-way ticket to hell".

He stressed that his government would not tolerate disorder, cautioning that anyone who attacks pedestrians threatens women's safety, or throws stones during festivals would face severe repercussions.

The warning follows violent clashes in Bareilly on 26 September, where crowds carrying "I Love Muhammad" posters confronted police outside a mosque. The unrest was reportedly sparked by the cancellation of a demonstration planned by cleric Tauqeer Raza Khan.

Adityanath reaffirmed his commitment to ensuring law, order, and safety across the state. *—PTI*

JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI HIND CONDEMNS ARREST OF MAULANA

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

The Jamaat-e-Islami Hind has condemned the arrest of Maulana Tauqeer Raza Khan and others in Bareilly, alleging the "misuse" of state machinery for political aims amid tensions surrounding the 'I Love Muhammad' campaign.

Syed Sadatullah Hussaini, president of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, described the "unjust arrest" of Raza and his associates as a worrying indication of the increasing communal politics in India. "What began with the simple slogan 'I Love Prophet Muhammad' was cynically equated with threats to public order," he noted, asserting that criminalising expressions of faith undermines India's civilisational ethos of respect and pluralism.

Hussaini further claimed that Raza was initially placed under house arrest, with later sweeping FIRs filed against many Muslims, all without proper investigation. He condemned the derogatory language directed at Raza and emphasised that such disproportionate use of state power deepens societal mistrust.

He called on the government to withdraw the exaggerated charges and release those "wrongfully" detained, underscoring that the strength of the country lies in its Constitution and social fabric. *—PTI*

KYC VIA VIDEO

Kerala couples register marriages online

T'PURAM, 28 SEPT

Anish R and Prakruthi K got married in a solemn ceremony in the presence of their dear ones in Kerala's Kochi some time back.

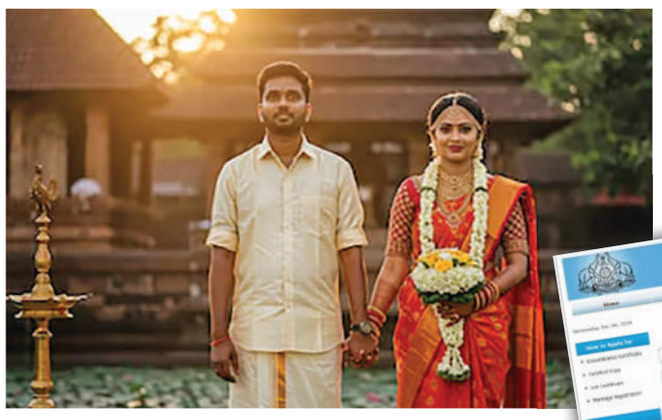
Days later, the young doctor couple registered their marriage at a local body in Ernakulam from their Pune apartment via online and downloaded the marriage certificate later.

This new trend of online marriage registrations in Kerala enables ta couple to register their wedding from anywhere in the world.

The Local Self-Government Department implemented the marriage registration via video E-KYC (electronic know your customer) through its Kerala Solutions for Managing Administrative Reformation and Transformation (K-SMART) platform, an in-house software developed by the Information Kerala Mission (IKM).

Launched across urban local bodies in January, it was extended to rural areas.

Of the 1,44,416 marriages registered between January 2024 and 22 September this year, 62,524 were registered online.



The Local Self-Government Departmanet implemented the E-KYC through its K-SMART platform *PHOTO: AI*

Thrissur leads with 10062 such registrations, followed by Malappuram with 8345 and Thiruvanthapuram with 7394.

Santhosh Babu, CMD, IKM, said the couple and their witnesses can complete identity verification through video KYC using either an Aadhaar-based OTP verification or email authentication.

The online marriage registration also remarkably reduced the workload of local self-government bodies and the rush at the office premises by the couple to ensure their physical presence.

Abhilash, Secretary of Guruvayoor Municipality, said the number of those physically appearing for marriage registration has come down to 10-25 per cent nowadays.

"Usually after the marriage thr couple would either come to the municipality office or its spacial counter opened at the temple compound. The wokload of completing the process was also very high," he said.

The K-Smart platform allows citizens to access a range of services online, including birth, death, and marriage registrations, building permits, property tax payments, and so on. *—PTI*

Child marriages in Assam fall below national average

GUWAHATI, 28 SEPT

A recent survey by the Centre for Legal Action and Behaviour Change for Children (C-LAB), released alongside the United Nations General Assembly, reveals that Assam has surpassed the national average in reducing child marriages, with an 84 per cent decline among girls and a 91 per cent reduction among boys from April 2022 to March 2025.

Chief Minister of the state Himanta Biswa Sarma praised the results, stating, "Assam's relentless fight against child marriage is bearing fruit," and emphasised the government's commitment to protect daughters' futures.

The report attributed this success to strict legal measures, including crackdowns by the state police and government initiatives like the Nijut Moina 2.0 scheme, which supports girls' education.

It recommended enforcement of laws, compulsory marriage registration, and a national day against child marriage to further combat this issue by 2030. *—PTI*

FREE GAZA

People gather in Berlin, Germany, to protest against Israel in a mass demonstration called "All Eyes on Gaza" in solidarity with Palestinians
PHOTO: PTI

How Karur's celebration turned into tragedy

Mounds of shoes and chappals, crushed water bottles, torn party flags, pieces of clothes, broken poles, shreds of paper sprayed from party poppers and striking garbage of sorts.

As early morning walkers and people who ventured out to buy milk and essentials crossed the venue of the mega rally --an arterial road-- addressed by TVK Chief Vijay, they could not make sense of what had happened on the previous night.

Several people, who went to sleep early or did not listen to news were shocked that as many as 38 people were killed and dozens injured.

While some videographers were filming the spot of the stampede, now barricaded by 'Police-Do Not Cross' kind of lengthy tapes and blocked to public, groups of elderly men enquired with photo-journalists present there in disbelief about the stampede.

While a TVK flag still flutters atop a highrise pole at the spot and oversized-speaker boxes and mega lights lying unattended amid a huge pile of torn party publicity material like posters, TVK workers and office-bearers do not wish to say anything about what went wrong in their plan.

A young man, who was among the crowd at the stampede spot, and who managed to safely get out of that spot after much struggle claimed that several people were pushed to a 'low-lying sewerage' close to the road margin as many tried to get out at the same time.

He regretted that what began as a 'celebration time' to hail their beloved matinee idol ended in tragedy.

"As fans were chanting Vijay's name, several did not realise that it was a stampede and that people fell down. Many who happened to place their legs on people who fell down also got tripped and fell," he told reporters.

Several people had their own claims about the cause for the stampede and it is not clear what went wrong; whether it was the choice of the venue or overcrowding, which is being witnessed ever since Vijay launched his state-wide tour on 13 September.

Footwear and other belongings of people, who attended the rally of actor and TVK Chief Vijay, lie on a road in the aftermath of a stampede during the rally, in Karur district, Tamil Nadu
PHOTO: PTI

At the venue, people pushed away tin sheets used to barricade and make enclosure kind of spaces and many who climbed on to thatched roof structures nearby fell down and sustained injuries. Almost at the same time, police baton-charged to control the situation. However, people, including children, who were caught in the crowd and fell down, could not comprehend what was happening.

A senior citizen in his 70s said he has never seen so many people getting killed in a stampede at a political party's event and blamed the youths for their anxiety to somehow take a look at the actor.

Staff at the Karur government hospital themselves were rattled by the unceasing siren of ambulances bringing injured people and policemen pitched in by carrying the victims to the treatment ward.

Familes that lost their children could not just believe that they had lost their loved little ones and were inconsolable. The visuals of young men and women crying by holding his motionless children shook hearts.

According to the government, 38 persons have died. They were 12 men, 16 women and 10 children.

At the mortuary, kin of the deceased wailed through the night and the sound of the piercing sobs could be heard from the afar, even close to the entrance of the premises.

Also, police repeated lathicharge nearly an hour following the stampede to chase away the remaining crowds from the venue.

Following the stampede, Vijay left the venue and did not meet reporters waiting at Tiruchirappalli and Chennai airports.

"My heart has broken, I am in unbearable, inexplicable pain and grief, " he said in a social media post. The actor added that he prayed for speedy recovery of those being treated in hospitals. He extended his sympathies to the families of "my dear brothers and sisters killed in Karur."

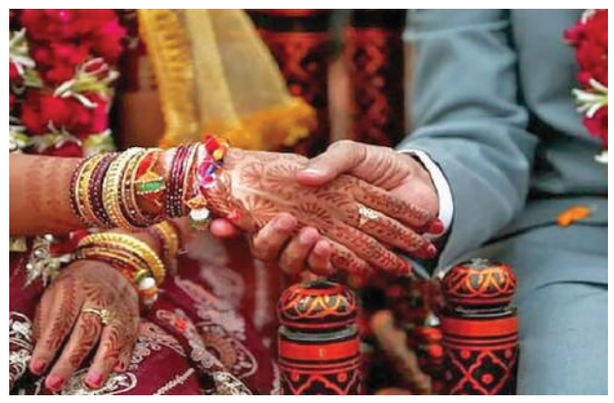
Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin rushed from Chennai to Karur and interacted with doctors on the treatment being provided to the affected people and comforted them, and assured them of best care. The CM reached Karur from Chennai past midnight.

Authorities announced helpline numbers to reach the Karur district collect office helpdesk (04324 256306 and Whatsapp 7010806322). *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR ساڈھ

Survey: MP girls opt for self-reliance over marriage



In a notable shift in societal attitudes towards marriage, 62.5 per cent of girls in Madhya Pradesh are now preferring to marry after the age of 21, compared to 56 per cent in 2020, as per a government survey.

This change is likely due to girls prioritising education and career over marriage, and also government schemes providing support to them, experts feel.

According to the recently released Sample Registration System (SRS)-2023, 62.5 per cent of girls in MP preferred to marry after the age of 21.

These figures indicate a significant difference in attitudes towards marriage between girls in rural and urban areas.

While 57.5 per cent of girls in rural areas preferred to marry after the age of 21, in urban areas the rate was 80.2 per cent.

The national average for girls marrying after the age of 21 is 72.2 per cent, and Madhya Pradesh lags behind. But, considering the SRS-2020 data, the situation in the state has improved.

While the data reflects a significant shift in the age of marriage in urban areas, there is still considerable room for improvement in rural areas.

Another aspect of this survey also indicates that there has been no significant change in the marriage rate of girls under 18.

As per the SRS-2023, girls marrying under the age of 18 was 2.0 per cent, compared to 2.1 percent in the 2020 report.

Girls marrying between the ages of 18 and 20 was 41.7 per cent in 2020, which dropped to 35.6 per cent in the 2023 report.

The SRS is a large-scale demographic survey that collects population-related data based on age, gender, and marital status.

Experts say the increasing trend of girls marrying after 21 indicates they are getting educated and want to become self-reliant.

"There has been a change not only in the thinking of girls but also in the thinking of their families and society. People are emphasising girls' education and skill development. Girls also want to become self-reliant before marriage," Manjula Tiwari, former deputy director of the Madhya Pradesh Women and Child Development Department, told PTI.

This is the reason for the increased percentage in the marriageable age of girls, she said.

Neha Bagga, state spokesperson of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), also said that whether it is family or personal, girls are prioritising standing on their own feet first.

Along with this, the state government schemes like Ladli Laxmi are encouraging them in this direction and are proving positive in preventing child marriage.

"Therefore, girls are now emphasising education, prioritising jobs, and then becoming self-reliant and shaping their future," Bagga said.

The Ladli Laxmi Yojana aims to improve girls' health and education, prevent foeticide and child marriages.

The financial assistance under the scheme is given when a woman turns 21 only if she has not been married before the age of 18.

However, Tiwari said if government policies were the reason behind this change in girls' thinking, then there would be no difference between the figures in rural and urban areas.

The changing social values, rather than government policies, are a more important contributor to this, she claimed.

Congress state spokesperson Aparajita Pande also said the perspective and horizons have widened.

"Strong sense of self backed by sound education enables them to acquire a set of skills and project themselves as strong, independent individuals with their unique identity," she said.

She claimed the increasing number of cases of domestic violence, harassment and dowry death have made women realise how important it is to be financially independent. *—PTI*

The financial assistance under the scheme is given when a woman turns 21 only if she has not been married before the age of 18
PHOTO: PTI

Here's how digital ID cards will help UK deal with illegal immigration

The UK's new digital ID card scheme, announced by **Keir Starmer** on September 26, has two big questions swirling around it. Is it a solution to illegal immigration? And will it give the government too much power to monitor people?

These questions are likely to dominate discussion and debate for some time. A petition has been posted and civil liberty groups and politicians are already questioning the value of the scheme. But what is the reality?

WHAT IS A DIGITAL ID CARD?

Similar to the NHS app and various other existing digital cards, the new scheme will create a universal form of identification stored on mobile phones. When accessing public services, the ID could be used in the same way similar schemes are used across Europe, offering the promise of a more efficient process. Estonia has famously operated a digital ID system since 2002.

One of the aspects of the new scheme that may be overlooked in the forthcoming debate is the benefits this would have in potentially reducing bureaucracy, cost, fraud and waiting times when people are trying to prove they are eligible for certain services. While there are concerns over ID cards from a civil liberties point of view, their use in improving efficiency is something to bear in mind.

Employers and landlords would need to examine ID cards to confirm the identity of applicants
PHOTO: FREEPIK

The other imperative in this scheme is monitoring who has the right to work in the UK. Anyone wanting to work or rent a home in the UK would need one, replacing the current practice of using a variety of documents such as driving licences, national insurance numbers and gas bills.

There is therefore an expectation that this will affect illegal immigration by deterring people who don't have the right to be in the UK from trying to get jobs. Employers and landlords would need to examine ID cards to confirm the identity of applicants.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION & SHADOW ECONOMY

Combating the flow of illegal immigrants has been a consistent problem for both the current Labour government and the previous Conservative regime. The appeal of the UK is related in part to the work opportunities available to those who can make it to the country and blend in.

In principle, the current eVisas scheme and the new digital ID card would cut off access to legitimate work for those entering the country illegally – although groups such as Migrants' Rights Network have questioned the value of the eVisas scheme for those wanting to prove their immigration status.

- When accessing public services, the ID could be used in the same way similar schemes are used across Europe, offering the promise of a more efficient process.

With the political debate focusing on trying to stop small boat crossings, this may seem like an indirect way to address a problem – but cutting off access to work could have an impact on the appeal of the UK in the first place.

Those trying to stay in the UK undetected would need to work in the shadow economy and live in accommodation that did not check ID. The shadow economy is estimated to be 10.8 per cent of GDP in the UK. Both activities could lead to increased dependency on organised crime groups and human traffickers.

Research suggests technology has been key in reducing crime over the past 20 years. Solutions to fraud have often been focused on improving security around identification processes, such as the introduction of facial recognition technology in passports. Perhaps digital ID cards are the next hi-tech solution needed to address illegal immigration.

STEPPING INTO THE FUTURE

ID cards have been tried and proposed before with similar intentions, so this is not a radical new idea. Also, we all carry a collection of digital ID on our phones, so in many respects, people are not being asked to do something we do not already do.

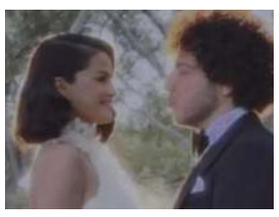
What could capture the public's attention and concern, however, is the idea that the card is mandatory and universal. If it is only used in the specified circumstances of accessing public services, seeking employment or rented accommodation, then there is no need to see the scheme as anything more than a new way to be efficient.

But will the demand to produce the card outside of these situations become a common practice in efforts to seek out illegal immigrants? What happens to those who do not have access to their digital ID card, or do not want one? Will it create a rift in society by providing more protection from illegal immigration? These questions are certain to be raised as the government moves ahead with its plan. *—PTI*

Seychelles to hold prez poll rerun after no winner

VICTORIA, 28 SEPT

Seychelles will hold a rerun of its presidential election after no candidate secured over 50 per cent of the vote, officials announced Sunday. Opposition leader Patrick Herminie of United Seychelles received 48.8 per cent, while incumbent President Wavel Ramkalawan of Linyon Demokratik Seselwa got 46.4 per cent. A new date is yet to be set. Herminie aims to return United Seychelles to power after its 2020 defeat. Ramkalawan seeks a second term, focusing on economic recovery, social progress, and environmental sustainability. Key voter concerns include climate change and a growing heroin crisis. Early voting began Thursday, with most ballots cast Saturday. Seychelles remains Africa's richest country per capita. *—PTI*



Selena Gomez ties the knot with Benny Blanco

LOS ANGELES, 28 SEPT

Selena Gomez has tied the knot with music producer Benny Blanco. The couple, engaged since December 2024, wed on Saturday, with Gomez sharing wedding photos on Instagram, captioned "9.27.25". Gomez, 33, wore a white sleeveless turtle-neck gown, while Blanco, 37, matched in a formal suit. Blanco is known for producing hits for Justin Bieber, Halsey, Katy Perry, and Ed Sheeran. The pair confirmed their relationship in December 2023, though they had been linked since June. They've collaborated on songs including 'Same Old Love', 'I Can't Get Enough', and 2023's 'Single Soon'. Gomez recently starred in season five of 'Only Murders in the Building'. *—PTI*

US, UK, France veto UN bid to delay Iran sanctions, ensuring snapback, shutting out diplomacy. Iran has rejected a US proposal to hand over its enriched uranium in exchange for a three-month sanction waiver **PHOTO: PTI**

UN reimposes sanctions on Iran 10yrs after nuke deal

Iran labels sanctions as 'unfair and illegal', warning they jeopardise diplomacy

DUBAI, 28 SEPT

The United Nations has reimposed sweeping economic and military sanctions on Iran under the 2015 nuclear deal's "snapback" mechanism, citing Tehran's "continued nuclear escalation" and lack of cooperation with international inspectors.

The sanctions, triggered by the UK, France and Germany after failed talks at the UN, took effect Sunday. They freeze Iranian assets abroad, halt arms deals, and penalise Iran's ballistic missile development, tightening the squeeze on an economy already battered by inflation, a record-low rial, and surging food prices.

Iran suspended inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) after the US and Israel bombed nuclear and military sites in June. Though inspections resumed Friday, Iran's refusal to account for its high-enriched uranium stockpile contributed to the snapback decision. Tehran now holds uranium enriched to 60 per cent purity, a technical step away from weapons-grade.

- The sanctions come as Iran's people face soaring prices — rice has doubled, meat is unaffordable for many, and essentials like milk and butter see daily hikes.

President Masoud Pezeshkian labelled the sanctions "unfair and illegal", warning they jeopardise diplomacy. Iran has rejected a US proposal to hand over its enriched uranium in exchange for a three-month sanction waiver. Meanwhile, lawmakers are considering withdrawing from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty altogether.

Iran insists its nuclear programme is peaceful, but the West and the IAEA remain unconvinced. Tehran argues that the US's 2018 withdrawal from the deal invalidates Europe's snapback authority.

The sanctions come as Iran's people face soaring prices — rice has doubled, meat is unaffordable for many, and essentials like milk and butter see daily hikes. Inflation officially stands at 34.5 per cent, but food prices have risen over 50 per cent, worsening public anxiety.

Mental health professionals report a spike in patients amid economic despair and fears of renewed conflict. As missile sites damaged in the June war are rebuilt, Iranians brace for potential clashes with Israel or the US. *—PTI*

Russia attacks Ukraine with 600 drones in 12 hours

KYIV, 28 SEPT

At least four people, including a 12-year-old girl, were killed and 10 others wounded after Russia launched a major drone and missile attack on Kyiv overnight into Sunday. It marked the deadliest assault on the Ukrainian capital since an airstrike last month killed 21.

The Russian aerial bombardment lasted more than 12 hours. The barrage - involving nearly 600 drones and several dozen missiles aimed at seven regions of Ukraine - is one of the heaviest in recent months.

Tymur Tkachenko, head of the Kyiv City Administration, confirmed the casualties, stating the strikes targeted residential areas, civilian infrastructure, a medical facility, and a kindergarten. Over 20 locations across the city were hit, Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko reported.

Thick black smoke rose from central Kyiv as explosions shook the city. Emergency services responded at damaged sites, including a multi-storey residential building where top floors were gutted and windows shattered. Firefighters cleared debris as stunned residents gathered outside.

Rescuers work at the site of an apartment buildings damaged during a Russian attack in Kyiv, Ukraine **PHOTO: PTI**

At Kyiv's central train station, passengers took shelter amid anti-aircraft fire and the buzz of drones. "The sky has turned black again," said Erika, a resident.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said "hundreds of drones and missiles" were involved, calling for increased international pressure on Russia. Moscow has not commented.

Poland deployed fighter jets after Russian strikes extended to western Ukraine. Polish forces described the move as "preventative" amid fears of war spilling into neighbouring countries. Recent incidents include Russian drones landing in Poland and aircraft violating Estonian airspace.

The attack came a day after President Zelenskyy announced a USD 90 billion US weapons deal, including American purchases of Ukrainian-made drones.

Meanwhile, Russia claimed it downed 41 Ukrainian drones overnight. *—PTI*

Portland, Oregon push back as Trump deploys troops

PORTLAND, 28 SEPT

Federal agents in armoured vehicles arrived at a federal building in downtown Portland as tensions rise amid Antifa-led protests outside an ICE facility (in pic). President Donald Trump announced deployment of the US military to protect federal buildings and immigration centres from "domestic terrorists."

Trump directed Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth to "provide all necessary troops" to defend "war-ravaged Portland," a claim rejected by local officials. Oregon Governor Tina Kotek said there was "no insurrection" and Portland can manage its own safety. Senator Ron Wyden called Trump's narrative false and demanded federal forces "stay the hell out of our city."

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Mayor Keith Wilson reaffirmed Portland's sanctuary city status, pledging resistance to federal overreach. The city has joined a lawsuit against the administration and is moving to legally bar local cooperation with immigration enforcement, risking the loss of $350 million in federal grants. A judge blocked the funding freeze, but the administration is appealing.

- Last week, Trump labelled Antifa as a "major terrorist" organisation.

Last week, Trump labelled Antifa, a loosely organised leftist group known for masked protests, as a "major terrorist organisation," citing Portland as a hotspot. Since the assassination of conservative activist Charlie Kirk, Trump has intensified efforts against the "radical left," blaming them for political violence. He previously deployed the National Guard and active-duty Marines to Los Angeles and Washington, DC as part of his law enforcement crackdown. *—Agencies*

Gaza death toll tops 66,000 as Bibi heads to meet Trump

LIVERPOOL/NEW YORK, 28 SEPT

Over 66,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Israel-Hamas war, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu prepares to meet US President Donald Trump at the White House on Monday.

Netanyahu, under growing international pressure, told the UN General Assembly that Israel "must finish the job" against Hamas. Meanwhile, the EU considers sanctions, and more countries are recognising a Palestinian state, increasing calls for a cultural and sports boycott of Israel.

Trump, while maintaining support for Israel, has shown signs of frustration—especially after Israel's failed airstrike on Hamas leadership in Qatar earlier this month. Ceasefire negotiations have since stalled.

Trump is expected to present a 21-point ceasefire plan in Washington, which reportedly includes a 48-hour hostage release and a phased Israeli withdrawal. Arab officials say the proposal is still under discussion. Hamas has indicated it is open to reviewing any plan that leads to a full Israeli withdrawal and end to the war. The US ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, will visit Cairo early next month to further ceasefire efforts amid deteriorating Egypt-Israel relations.

Israel's campaign has devastated Gaza, displacing 90% of the population and pushing Gaza City into famine. At least 10 people were killed overnight in Nuseirat refugee camp, with continued explosions reported.

The death toll stands at 66,005, with 1,68,162 wounded since Hamas' 7 October 2023 attack.

Ministry says women and children make up around half of the dead, a figure considered reliable by the UN. Israel's offensive has destroyed vast areas of Gaza, displaced around 90 per cent of the population and caused a catastrophic humanitarian crisis. *—Agencies*

Photos of Palestinian children killed by Israel in Gaza are displayed during a pro-Palestinians protest in Istanbul, Turkey **PHOTO: PTI**

Ex-French prez gets 5 yrs jail over Libya financing

NANTERRE, 28 SEPT

Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy has been sentenced to five years in prison for criminal conspiracy linked to illegal Libyan funding of his 2007 election campaign. He also faces a euro 1,00,000 fine and five years' ineligibility from public office.

The landmark ruling, delivered on 25 September, marks a major shift in French justice — signalling the judiciary's growing independence from political power. Sarkozy is due in court on 13 October to learn when he must begin serving his sentence. His appeal rights remain, but the sentence is provisionally enforceable.

The case centres on millions of euros allegedly received from late Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in exchange for international support. Sarkozy becomes the first post-war French president expected to serve jail time.

The political fallout is significant, with some critics warning of a "government of judges" while others hail it as justice finally catching up with power.

Nicolas Sarkozy **PHOTO: PTI**

Sarkozy's conviction follows that of far-right leader Marine Le Pen, who was earlier banned from office for misusing EU funds.

Legal experts say the ruling upholds the republican principle of equality before the law, enshrined in 1789 but long undermined by political privilege.

Recent decades have seen a shift, with convictions of figures like Jacques Chirac and Bernard Tapie marking the end of elite immunity.

Despite claims of judicial overreach, many see this as democracy in action — applying the law without exception, even at the highest levels. *—PTI*

UK wants migrants to prove social worth for settlement

The UK government led by Keir Starmer are exploring ways to link settlement rights to community involvement **PHOTO: X**

LONDON, 28 SEPT

UK Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood has signalled plans to overhaul the process for long-term or permanent settlement, suggesting migrants may soon need to prove their "social worth" — not just economic contributions, to gain Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR).

In an interview with The Sun on Sunday, Mahmood said she is exploring ways to link settlement rights to community involvement, such as volunteering or civic participation, alongside jobs, salaries, and tax records.

"We need legal migration, it is a good thing... But in addition to living and working here, people should contribute to wider society," said Mahmood, Britain's first Muslim woman Home Secretary. A Kashmiri-origin Labour MP, Mahmood cited her parents' example of integrating through local community work after migrating to Birmingham in the 1960s. "They did more than simply work and earn a salary," she said. The government also plans to double the current five-year threshold for ILR eligibility, a move aimed at tightening the immigration system amid rising public concern. *—PTI*

Moldovans vote amid fear of Russian interference

CHISINAU, 28 SEPT

Moldovans headed to the polls on Sunday for a pivotal parliamentary election clouded by allegations of Russian interference, with the country at a crossroads between European integration and a return to Moscow's influence.

Voters are choosing a new 101-seat parliament, which will determine the next prime minister and government. By 11am, over 4,00,000 voters (14 per cent) had cast ballots.

The ruling pro-European Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS), which has held a majority since 2021, faces strong challenges from Russia-friendly parties amid economic dissatisfaction and rising living costs.

President Maia Sandu, after voting, accused Russia of "massive interference" and urged Moldovans to "protect democracy and choose peace." Moldova gained EU candidate status in 2022 following Russia's invasion of neighbouring Ukraine. Prime Minister Dorin Recean warned of a "hybrid war" by Moscow involving vote-buying, cyberattacks, disinformation, and plans to incite riots. Authorities remain on high alert for false bomb threats and street violence. *—PTI*

2ND MAJOR STORM

Evacuation on, airports shut as typhoon nears Vietnam

HANOI, 28 SEPT

- Forecasters warned of continued heavy rain through 1 October, heightening the risk of flash floods and landslides.

Vietnam evacuated tens of thousands from central and northern provinces on Sunday as Typhoon Bualoi approached faster than forecast, bringing winds of up to 133 kph, storm surges over a metre, and torrential rain.

By 4am, Bualoi was about 200 km east of central Vietnam, heading northwest. Landfall is expected around 6pm. between Quang Tri and Nghe An provinces.

Authorities banned fishing in northern and central waters and ordered evacuations in vulnerable zones. State media reported Da Nang planned to relocate over 210,000 people, while Hue prepared to move 32,000 coastal residents to safer ground.The Civil Aviation Authority suspended operations at four coastal airports, including Da Nang International, with flights rescheduled. Heavy rains have lashed central provinces since Saturday night. In Hue, floods swamped low-lying streets and ripped roofs from homes. One person is missing after being swept away by floodwaters.

In Quang Tri, a fishing boat sank and another was stranded while seeking shelter. Eight people were rescued, with efforts ongoing to locate three others. Bualoi is the second major storm to hit the region in a week. Typhoon Ragasa left at least 28 dead in the Philippines and Taiwan before weakening over Vietnam on Thursday. *—PTI*

Experts warn that climate change is fuelling stronger, wetter storms due to warming oceans **PHOTO: PTI**

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Bengaluru may see 21% growth in housing sales

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

Bengaluru's housing market is witnessing robust demand, with sales projected to rise 21 per cent in July-September to 16,840 units, up from 13,966 a year ago, said PropEquity. Sales during January-September, 2025, are estimated at 49,559 units compared to 46,392 in the same period last year. Developers expect momentum to continue in the festive quarter. Industry leaders attribute demand to the city's IT and startup ecosystem, cosmopolitan appeal, and infrastructure growth. "Bengaluru's boom is fundamentally driven by genuine buyers, making it sustainable," said Karishmah Siingh of Sattva Group. While housing sales across India's top nine cities are likely to dip 4 per cent, Bengaluru continues to defy the trend. *—PTI*

UK govt to aid Jaguar after cyber-attack

LONDON, 28 SEPT

The UK government has announced a loan guarantee of up to £1.5B to support Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) after a crippling cyber-attack forced production to halt earlier this month. The loan, provided by a commercial bank and backed by UK Export Finance, will be repaid over five years and aims to stabilise the Tata Motors-owned carmaker's supply chain, much of it made up of struggling small and medium-sized enterprises. JLR directly employs 34,000 staff in UK and supports a further 1,20,000 through suppliers. The firm is working with the National Cyber Security Centre to restore systems, clear a backlog of supplier payments and restart operations. The Scattered Lapsus$ Hunters group has claimed responsibility for attack on Marks & Spencer, Co-op and Harrods. *—PTI*

Entry of luxury hotels in India may remain tight

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

The supply of luxury hotels in India is expected to remain limited due to high barriers to entry, including scarce land, restrictive zoning, heavy regulation, high capital costs, and long gestation periods, according to a JM Financial report. Despite these constraints, demand for luxury rooms is growing rapidly, driven by rising disposable incomes and preference for premium experiences. The segment's Average Daily Rates grew at 5.7 per cent CAGR during FY14–24, outpacing the broader industry's 3.1 per cent, HVS ANAROCK Research noted. Demand for luxury rooms is projected to grow at 10.6 per cent CAGR between FY24–28, while supply rises only 5.9 per cent. This imbalance is expected to boost Revenue Per Available Room. *—PTI*

NTPC to appoint consultant for overseas uranium

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

State-owned NTPC will appoint a consultant to identify uranium mines overseas after signing an agreement with Uranium Corporation of India Ltd (UCIL), a company official said. This is part of NTPC's plan to secure raw material for future nuclear projects to be developed individually. Currently, NTPC is setting up a nuclear project in Rajasthan through a joint venture with Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd (NPCIL), investing about Rs 42,000 crore. NTPC holds 49 per cent, while NPCIL has 51 per cent. NTPC CMD Gurdeep Singh said the company is collaborating with nuclear technology providers and state governments to set up standalone projects. The consultant will advise on mine locations and assess reserves and logistics costs. *—PTI*

WeWork to launch ₹3,000 cr IPO on 3 October

The IPO is entirely an Offer for Sale of up to 4.63 cr shares

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

Co-working major WeWork India is gearing up to launch its initial public offering (IPO) on 3 October, with people aware of the matter pegging the issue size to nearly Rs 3,000 crore.

The issue will close on 7 October, with bidding for anchor investors opening for a day on 1 October, as per the red herring prospectus (RHP).

As per the draft papers, the proposed IPO is entirely an Offer for Sale (OFS) of up to 4.63 crore equity shares. Promoter group firm Embassy Buildcon LLP and investor 1 Ariel Way Tenant Ltd (part of WeWork Global) will offload shares.

Since the issue is an OFS, WeWork India itself will not receive any proceeds from the listing.

Currently, Embassy Group holds about 76.21 per cent in WeWork India, while WeWork Global owns 23.45 per cent.

Established in 2017, WeWork India operates under an exclusive license of the 'WeWork' brand in India and is promoted by the Bengaluru-based real estate major Embassy Group.

In its draft papers, WeWork India stated that the objective of the offer is to achieve the benefits of listing its equity shares on the stock exchanges. The company expects the listing to enhance visibility, provide liquidity to existing shareholders, and establish a public market for its stock in India.

WeWork Global invested USD 100 million in 2021, while in January 2024, the company raised Rs 500 crore through a rights issue, primarily to reduce debt and support growth.

WeWork India's operations are spread across major tier 1 cities, including Bengaluru, Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, Gurugram, Noida, Delhi, and Chennai.

It currently manages 77 lakh sq ft of space, of which 70 lakh sq ft is operational, with a desk capacity of 1.03 lakh. The company employs more than 500 people. *—PTI*

Currently, Embassy Group holds about 76.21 per cent in WeWork India, while WeWork Global owns 23.45 per cent. *PHOTO: WIKICOMMONS*

- Established in 2017, WeWork India operates under an exclusive license of the 'WeWork' brand in India and is promoted by the Bengaluru-based real estate major Embassy Group.

LIMITED EARNINGS IMPACT

Only Sun Pharma faces some risk from US tariffs

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

The imposition of a 100 per cent tariff by the US on imports of branded and patented pharmaceutical products starting 1 October may not significantly hurt Indian drug makers, with Sun Pharma being exposed to some headline risk but with limited earnings impact, according to analysts.

Among Indian companies, only Sun Pharma has sizeable sales from patented drugs in the US (about 17 per cent of 2024-25 revenue), HSBC Global Investment Research said in a report.

The US last week announced the imposition of a 100 per cent tariff on branded or patented drugs entering the United States from 1 October, except for pharmaceutical companies building manufacturing plants in the US.

HSBC said Sun Pharma reported global sales of USD 1.217 billion from patented products in FY25, of which the US market accounted for about USD 1.1 billion, amounting to 17 per cent of total revenue and 8-10 per cent of consolidated EPS in FY25.

HSBC said that currently, Sun's patented products are mostly manufactured by global Contract Development and Manufacturing Organization (CDMO) partners, e.g. for Ilumya, its largest product in the patented portfolio, drug substance is done by a CDMO partner based in South Korea, while the finished dose is manufactured by a European CDMO.

Sun could also transfer the manufacturing of patented products to its three plants in the US. *—PTI*

RBI policies, tariff changes to impact markets: Analysts

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

Analysts predict that stock markets will be influenced by the Reserve Bank of India's interest rate decision, tariff-related developments, global trends, and foreign investor trading activities in the upcoming holiday-shortened week.

With markets closed on Thursday for Dussehra and Mahatma Gandhi Jayanti, analysts anticipate a data-heavy week ahead. "Both domestic and global cues will dictate momentum," remarked Ajit Mishra, Senior Vice President of Research at Religare Broking Ltd. Key domestic factors include industrial production data, the RBI's policy decision scheduled for 1 October, and the expiry of September derivatives contracts, which could introduce volatility.

The ongoing negotiations between India and the US for a bilateral trade agreement will also be closely monitored. Santosh Meena, Head of Research at Swastika Investmart, highlighted, "All eyes are on US–India trade relations for a possible relief rally," adding that the market is divided on the likelihood of a rate cut by the RBI.

Global elements, such as US macro data, the dollar index, and crude oil prices, will shape market direction, with foreign institutional investor (FII) flows being a crucial determinant, Meena noted.

Last week saw substantial declines, with the BSE benchmark losing 2,199.77 points or 2.66 per cent, and the NSE Nifty falling by 672.35 points or 2.65 per cent. According to Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Investments Limited, "Indian equities closed the week on a subdued note, with broad-based sectoral declines." *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

- Key domestic factors include industrial production data, RBI's policy decision scheduled for 1 Oct, and the expiry of September derivatives contracts, which could introduce volatility.

Mcap of top 10 firms' down by ₹2.99 lakh crore

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

India's top 10 most valued firms collectively lost Rs 2.99 lakh crore in market capitalisation last week, tracking a sharp sell-off in equities. The BSE benchmark index fell 2,199.77 points (2.66 per cent) amid weak sentiment.

Technology stocks bore the heaviest pressure after a steep hike in H-1B visa fees, while the rupee slid to a record low against US dollar. Adding to concerns, US imposed 100 per cent tariffs on branded and patented pharmaceutical imports, weighing on investor confidence across sectors.

TCS suffered the biggest erosion, losing Rs 97,598 crore to settle at Rs 10.49 lakh crore. Reliance Industries shed Rs 40,462 crore (Rs 18.64 lakh crore), followed by Infosys at Rs 38,096 crore (Rs 6.02 lakh crore). HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank together lost over Rs 62,000 crore.

Despite declines, Reliance remained the country's most valuable firm, ahead of HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, TCS and ICICI Bank. *—PTI*

NCLAT dismisses Reliance's capital share reduction plea

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

In a significant ruling for Reliance Retail, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has dismissed a petition challenging the company's reduction of equity share capital, affirming that non-promoters were offered a "fair value" for their shares. In 2023, Reliance Retail decided to cancel 78,65,423 equity shares held by minority shareholders, who constitute just 0.09 per cent of its total shareholding.

The NCLAT highlighted that the special resolution for this capital reduction received an overwhelming 99.99 per cent approval, with Reliance Retail offering Rs 1,380 per share, representing a 56 per cent premium over its fair value as determined by independent valuers.

NG Joshi, a minority shareholder holding just 129 shares, had previously contested this move before the Mumbai bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), arguing it was against minority interests and contradictory to the Companies Act, 2013. However, NCLT dismissed his petition earlier this year.

The NCLAT noted, "Once it is established that non-promoter shareholders are being paid a fair value... and where an overwhelming majority voted in favour... we find no reason to upset a reasoned order passed by the NCLT," underscoring the importance of majority decision in such matters. *—PTI*

FUNDS FOR GROWTH

Multiple firms file IPO papers with SEBI

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

Several Indian companies have filed initial public offering (IPO) papers with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), aiming to raise significant funds for growth and debt repayment.

Precision components manufacturer Indo MIM seeks Rs 1,000 crore through a mix of fresh equity shares and an offer for sale (OFS) of 12.97 crore shares.

The funds will target debt payments of Rs 720 crore. The Bengaluru-based firm operates across various sectors, including automotive and aerospace, and aims to leverage a pre-IPO placement of up to Rs 200 crore.

Meanwhile, CSM Technologies plans a fresh issue of 1.29 crore shares, focusing on strengthening its technological infrastructure and paying off debts.

Laser Power and Infra aims for Rs 1,200 crore, with Rs 800 crore from a fresh issue and an OFS of Rs 400 crore. This Kolkata-based manufacturer intends to use funds primarily for loan repayment.

Also, Alcobrew Distilleries India is seeking Rs 258.26 crore, with aims to expand its manufacturing and marketing of alcoholic beverages.

The IPO includes a fresh issue and an OFS of 1.8 crore shares. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

- Precision components manufacturer Indo MIM seeks Rs 1,000 crore through a mix of fresh equity shares and an offer for sale (OFS) of 12.97 crore shares.

26 top firms to invest ₹1.02L cr in Indian food sector

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

The government has signed agreements with 26 overseas and domestic firms during the 'World Food India' summit for investments worth Rs 1.02 lakh crore in India's food processing sector.

The summit, organised by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, was held at Bharat Mandapam in the national capital from 25 to 28 September.

"Over the course of the four-day event, 26 leading domestic and global companies signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) worth a total of Rs 1,02,046.89 crore, marking one of the largest investment announcements in India's food processing sector," the ministry added.

The companies that signed MoUs include Reliance Consumer Products, The Coca-Cola System in India, Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (Amul), Fair Exports (India) Pvt Ltd (Lulu Group), Nestle India, Tata Consumer Products Ltd and Carlsberg India Pvt Ltd. *—PTI*

Gold, silver may extend rally this week

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

Gold and silver prices are expected to extend their rally this week, though analysts caution profit-taking may emerge ahead of key global economic data. Investors will closely track manufacturing and services PMI releases, US non-farm payrolls, consumer confidence, and remarks from Federal Reserve officials.

On India's Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), December gold futures surged 3.77 per cent last week to close at a record Rs 1,14,891 per 10grms, after briefly touching Rs 1,15,139.

The metal has now logged twelve straight weekly gains since late June.

Globally, gold futures climbed 2.78 per cent to $3,809 per ounce, nearing $3,825.

Analysts cite firm US economic data, expectations of Fed rate cuts, softer Treasury yields, and central bank demand as key drivers. Some forecast a move towards $4,000 sooner than anticipated.

Silver outpaced gold, with MCX December futures jumping 9.28 per cent to Rs 1,41,889 per kg, after hitting a record Rs 1,42,189.

Internationally, prices rose 8.61 per cent to $46.65 per ounce. Analysts see scope for silver to test Rs 1,50,000–Rs 1,70,000 in the near term, though volatility remains a risk. *—PTI*

SWITCH SUPPLIER EASILY

Unhappy with supplier? LPG porting coming soon

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

Unhappy with your LPG provider? Relief may be around the corner. In a move similar to mobile number portability, cooking gas consumers will soon be allowed to change their supplier without altering their existing connection, offering more choice and improved service.

Oil regulator PNGRB has invited stakeholder and consumer comments on the LPG Interoperability Framework.

The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB), in the notice inviting comments, stated that in situations where a local distributor faces operational constraints, consumers often have limited alternatives, leading to hardship.

The then UPA government had, in October 2013, launched a pilot Portability of LPG connections in 24 districts, covering 13 states, and extended it pan-India in January 2014, covering 480 districts.

However, unlike cellular services, where consumers have the option to switch between different mobile companies, LPG consumers were in 2014 allowed limited options of changing only their dealers, not the oil company.

What that meant was that a consumer of Indane Gas from Indian Oil Corporation had the option to choose from Indane Gas dealers in the vicinity.

But, the consumer could not switch to Bharat Gas of Bharat Petroleum or HPGas of Hindustan Petroleum.

Inter-company portability was not legally possible at that time, as the law provided for an LPG cylinder belonging to a particular company to be submitted to only that company for refills.

PNGRB is now seeking to allow inter-company portability as well.

PNGRB said India has achieved near-universal LPG household coverage with over 32 crore connections as of FY25.

While interoperability has been adopted in telephony with much success, the same has not happened in the LPG sector. *—PTI*

Oil regulator PNGRB has invited stakeholder and consumer comments on the LPG Interoperability Framework *PHOTO: ANI*

GLENMARK, GRANULES, ZYDUS RECALL US PRODUCTS OVER MANUFACTURING ISSUES

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

Several Indian pharmaceutical companies, including Glenmark, Granules India, Sun Pharma, Zydus, and Unichem, are recalling products in the US market due to various manufacturing issues, as reported by the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA).

Glenmark Pharmaceuticals' US subsidiary is recalling 13,824 tubes of Azelaic Acid Gel from its Goa plant due to "CGMP deviations" after receiving market complaints about a gritty texture. This Class II nationwide recall was initiated on 17 September. The USFDA described a Class II recall as one where the use of a violative product may result in temporary or medically reversible health consequences, with minimal risk of severe adverse outcomes.

Granules India is recalling over 49,000 bottles of extended-release capsules, citing "failed impurities/degradation specifications." This Class III recall was issued on August 28, indicating no likelihood of adverse health consequences.

Sun Pharma is recalling 1,870 kits of a renal imaging agent for failed dissolution specifications in a Class II recall announced on 3 September.

Zydus Pharmaceuticals is recalling 8,784 bottles of Entecavir tablets for similar reasons, while Unichem Pharmaceuticals is recalling 230 bottles for a label mix-up in a Class I recall announced on 27 August. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

BCCI overhauls its cricket selection panel

The Board of Control for Cricket in India's officials PHOTO: BCCI

MUMBAI, 28 SEPT

The BCCI also announced major changes to its selection committees and other administrative posts during its Annual General Meeting (AGM) in New Delhi on Sunday.

Former India internationals RP Singh and Pragyan Ojha were inducted into the senior men's selection panel, while ex-Tamil Nadu batter S Sharath returned to the junior selection committee. The Ajit Agarkar-chaired men's panel now includes Shiv Sundar Das, Ajay Ratra, RP Singh, and Ojha.

In the women's selection panel, former India cricketer Amita Sharma replaced Neetu David as chairperson. Sharma, a right-arm seamer with five Tests, 116 ODIs, and 41 T20Is, will be joined by Shyama Dey, Jaya Sharma, and Sravanthi Naidu.

Their tenure will begin after the Women's World Cup, which starts Tuesday with India facing Sri Lanka in Guwahati.

Jayesh George was appointed as the first-ever independent chairperson of the Women's Premier League committee, while Rohan Jaitley was named chairperson of the BCCI Infrastructure Committee. Saikia said state associations have been asked to provide nominations for the Cricket Advisory Committee and Umpires' Committee based on eligibility criteria. Welcoming Manhas' election, former India spinner Harbhajan Singh described it as a positive move. "When a cricketer heads a cricket body, his experience helps. This has been happening for three terms, and it's great for the cricketers and for him to give back to the game," he said, urging the BCCI to support flood relief in Punjab and other affected states. Sourav Ganguly, now president of the Cricket Association of Bengal, did not attend the AGM. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Amita appointed chairperson of Indian women's cricket

MUMBAI, 28 SEPT

Former Indian bowler Amita Sharma has been appointed as the chairperson of the women's national selection committee during the Board of Control for Cricket in India's (BCCI) 95th Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Mumbai on Sunday. She replaces Neetu David in the role. Amita has represented India in 116 One-Day Internationals, picking up 87 wickets. She has also played five Tests and 41 T20Is in Indian colours, bagging five and 16 wickets respectively. In another important development, former India internationals Pragyan Ojha and RP Singh have been appointed as members of the senior men's national selection committee, replacing S. Sharath and Subroto Banerjee.—*PTI*

Nepal stun WI to script first victory over a Full Member

This is Nepal's biggest win on the international stage

SHARJAH, 28 SEPT

Nepal etched their name in history books, defeating two-time world champions West Indies by 19 runs in the opening T20 International here for their first-ever victory against a Full ICC Member nation.

Nepal had earlier beaten Afghanistan in 2014, but the latter was still an Associate Member at that time.

Saturday's result, therefore, marked Nepal's biggest win yet on the international stage, and came in their maiden T20I clash against the Caribbean side and first bilateral series against a Full Member.

Sent in to bat, Nepal posted 148 for 8 and then returned to restrict the West Indies to 129 for 9.West Indies reduced Nepal to 12 for 2 in the fourth over after Akeal Hosein and Jason Holder struck early.

But Nepal skipper Rohit Paudel (38) and Kushal Malla (30) steadied the innings with a 58-run stand before debutant Navin Bidaisee dismissed both in quick succession. Malla provided the early impetus with two sixes, while Dipendra Singh Airee (24) and Gulsan Jha chipped in to keep the scoreboard moving.

Holder dented Nepal with three wickets in the 19th over, but some inconsistent catching from the West Indies allowed Nepal to post a competitive 148 for 8.In reply, the West Indies' chase began poorly as Kyle Mayers was run out by a sharp direct hit from Bhurtel.

Debutant Ackeem Auguste (15) briefly counterattacked with two sixes, but the Nepal spinners soon applied the brakes.Lalit Rajbanshi and Paudel bowled tight middle overs to leave West Indies reeling.Airee then caught Keacy Carty short of his crease in a brilliant fielding effort, and with Holder (5) falling cheaply to Bhurtel, the Caribbean side's hopes faded.

Hosein and Fabian Allen struck a few blows later, but Karan KC dismissed Hosein in the 19th over to all but seal the result. —*PTI*

Nepal stun West Indies in 1st T20I of the 3-match series PHOTO: PTI

PHOTO: PTI

Bulgarian Ruzhdi wins 6th successive shot put gold

NEW DELHI, 28 SEPT

Bulgaria's Ruzhdi claimed his sixth successive gold medal in the men's shot put F55 competition with a world record throw in the World Para Athletics Championships here on Sunday. The 34-year-old sent the iron ball to a distance of 12.94m in his sixth and final attempt, bettering his own world record of 12.68m, which he had set in the 2023 World Championships in Paris, in the event in which athletes compete from a seated position as they do not have lower limb function. Serbia's Nebojsa Duric took the silver with a personal best 12.52m while Lech Stoltman of Poland was third with 12.02m.—*PTI*

Marc wins seventh MotoGP world championship

PARIS, 28 SEPT

An emotional Marc Marquez clinched his seventh MotoGP world championship and his first since 2019 on Sunday after finishing second at the Japan grand prix, with Francesco Bagnaia winning the race. The Spanish Ducati rider has been in brilliant form all year, and he underlined his dominance by wrapping up the title with five events of the season remaining. He knew that placing first or second would clinch the title regardless of where his brother and closest championship rival Alex, finished the race. After crossing the line, Marquez raised both arms aloft before sobbing and yelling as his achievement began to sink in.—*PTI*

Abhay Singh beats World No. 5 Karim Gawad in Qatar

QATAR, 28 SEPT

India's Abhay Singh claimed a stunning win over World No. 5 Karim Gawad in the round of 32 of the Qatar Classic Squash on Sunday. The 27-year-old Abhay, ranked 35th in the world, secured one of his biggest wins of his career by trumping his Egyptian opponent 11-6, 11-4, 1-11, 11-9. Gawad, a former world champion and World No. 1, was outplayed by Abhay in a 41-minute encounter. Abhay, who is a multiple Asian Games medallist, will now face Fares Dessouky of Egypt in the round of 16. Earlier this year, in May, Abhay claimed his 11th PSA Tour title by winning the Hyder Trophy 2025. —*PTI*

Rahul Chahar grabs 8/51 on Surrey debut

LONDON, 28 SEPT

India leg-spinner Rahul Chahar broke a 166-year-old record by grabbing eight wickets on his Surrey debut in county cricket.

His figures of 24-7-51-8 against Hampshire were the best figures by a debutant for Surrey, going past Willian Mudle's mark of 7/61 set in 1859.

Chahar took a match haul of 10/118, helped Surrey defeat Hampshire by 20 runs, and maintained their second spot in the County Division 1 table.

Chahar's match figures are also the best of his first-class career. —*PTI*

ISSF JUNIOR WORLD CUP

Anushka Thokur (centre) flanked by fellow medalists atop the podium PHOTO: PTI

Anushka wins gold in women's 50m rifle 3 positions event

TUGHLAKABAD, 28 SEPT

Indian shooter Anushka Thokur bagged the gold medal in the women's 50m Rifle 3 Positions event at the ISSF Junior World Cup at the Dr Karni Singh Range, Tughlakabad, on Sunday.

She finished with a score of 461.0, ahead of Individual Neutral Athletes (AIN) Anastasiia Sorikina (454.9) and Mariia Kruglova (444.0) in second and third, respectively.

This is her second gold of the competition, having earlier won top honours in the 50m rifle prone event.

Meanwhile, the other Indians in the event, Mahit Sandhi (422.7) and Prachi Gaikwad (399.3) finished fifth and seventh, respectively.

In the junior men's competition, Adriyan Karmakar secured the silver medal with a score of 454.8, only behind neutral competitor Dmitrii Pimenov (459.9). Kamil Nuriakhmetov rounded off the podium with a score of 441.0.

Adriyan's compatriots Vedant Nitin Waghmare (420.9) and Sami Ullah Khan (393.0) finished fifth and seventh, respectively.

The medals extended India's lead at the top of the standings, with four gold, six silver, and three bronze.

In the 25m rapid fire pistol junior (Stage 1 qualification), which has an extremely depleted field of just eight shooters, of which five are Indians, the host country's Suraj Sharma shared the lead with Individual Neutral Athlete Aleksandr Kovalev, both scoring 287.

India's Sameer Gulia (286), Abhinav Choudhary (284), Mukesh Nelavalli (283), and Jatin (282) followed in third to sixth positions. —*PTI*

NATIONAL OPEN ATHLETICS C'SHIPS

Manikanta wins 100m title as he clocks second-fastest Indian time

BIRSA, 28 SEPT

Manikanta Hoblidhar bettered his two-year-old meet record as he clocked India's second fastest time (10.19) on his way to win the men's 100m title in the National Open athletics championships at the Birsa Munda Stadium, Morabadi, here on Sunday.

On a rain-affected day, former National record holder Manikanta, who equalled the meet record (10.23, achieved in Bengaluru) in the semifinals, performed with consistency and confidence to thwart the challenge from second-placed Pranav Gurav (10.31) and third-positioned Harsh Raut (10.38) in a quality field.

The 24-year-old was 0.01 off Animesh Kujur's National record.

"I was aiming for 10.10, but the wet track slowed down my pace. My target is to get an individual medal at the 2026 Asian Games," said Manikanta, whose previous personal best was 10.22.

Two promising athletes, high jumper Gobika K. and sprinter Abinaya Rajarajan, suffered serious-looking injuries. After securing the gold medal with 1.79m, Gobika injured her right knee while attempting to improve upon her performance.

She was stretchered off while screaming in excruciating pain. —*PTI*

Manikanta Hoblidhar PHOTO: PTI

Carlos Alcaraz powers into semis, Rune crashes out

BEIJING, 28 SEPT

World number one Carlos Alcaraz stormed into the semi-finals of the Japan Open on Sunday with a commanding 6-2, 6-4 win over American Brandon Nakashima, while Danish third seed Holger Rune was sent packing by Jenson Brooksby.

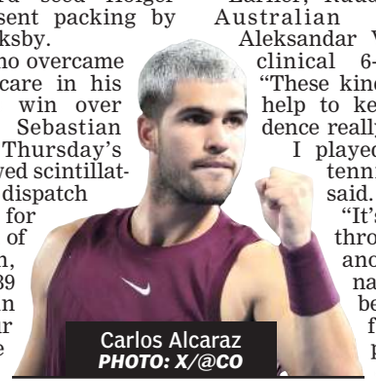
Alcaraz, who overcame an injury scare in his straight-sets win over Argentine Sebastian Baez in Thursday's opener, showed scintillating form to dispatch Nakashima for his 65th win of the season, thumping 39 winners in the one-hour 20-minute contest.

The 22-year-old Spaniard, fresh from reclaiming top spot in the world rankings after clinching his sixth Grand Slam title at the U.S. Open earlier this month, next faces Norwegian fourth seed Casper Ruud.

Earlier, Ruud blazed past Australian qualifier Aleksandar Vukic with a clinical 6-3, 6-2 win.

"These kinds of matches help to keep my confidence really, really high. I played some great tennis," Alcaraz said.

"It's great to go through, to play another semifinal. It's special, because it's the first time I'm playing in Japan —*PTI*



Carlos Alcaraz PHOTO: X/@CO

Coco Gauff through to third round of China Open

BEIJING, 28 SEPT

French Open winner Coco Gauff was forced to go the distance against Leylah Fernandez before closing out a tight three-setter 6-4, 4-6, 7-5 on Sunday to advance to the third round at the China Open.

The defending champion and a firm crowd favorite in Beijing overcame a second-set stumble and then struggled to serve out the match in the third, before breaking Fernandez in the 12th game of the deciding set to clinch it.

Gauff will next face No. 16 Belinda Bencic or Australian Priscilla Hon in the WTA 1000-series tournament.

In earlier matches on Sunday, Eva Lys beat No. 10 Elena Rybakina 6-3, 1-6, 6-4, and American McCartney Kessler was leading Barbora Krejcikova 1-6, 7-5, 3-0 when the Czech player retired from the match. —*PTI*

Ace Indian swimmer Srihari Nataraj PHOTO: PTI

Srihari Nataraj dazzles in 200m freestyle, wins silver

AHMEDABAD, 28 SEPT

Ace Indian swimmer Srihari Nataraj dazzled on the opening day of the 11th Asian Aquatics Championships, clinching the 200m freestyle silver medal in the elite continental competition in over 16 years, here on Sunday.

Srihari clocked 1:48.47 seconds to finish behind 17-year-old Chinese Xu Haibo, who timed 1:46.83 seconds and was 1.64 seconds faster than the tall 24-year-old Indian, who has represented the country at the 2020 Tokyo and 2024 Paris Olympics.

Hinata Ando of Japan finished with a bronze, clocking 1:48.73 seconds.

On Saturday, India's head coach Nihar Ameen had expressed confidence in his wards winning 3-4 medals in the showpiece continental competition, and the 24-year-old Srihari did not disappoint by setting the tone for the other Indians.

The two-time Olympian, who earlier this year set the 100m freestyle national record at the FISU Summer World University Games in Rhine-Ruhr, Germany, competed in Heat 2 in the morning session to qualify behind Iran's Mohammad Ghasemi, clocking 1:51.09.

The other Indian, Aneesh Sunil Kumar Gowda, competing in Heat 4, could not make the grade, finishing fourth in the race with a time of 1:52.62 seconds.—*PTI*

Qatar to host Intercontinental Cup final

DUBAI, 28 SEPT

Qatar will host the remaining three matches of the Intercontinental Cup in December for the second year in a row, football's world governing body FIFA said on Sunday.

The Middle-Eastern nation also staged the final phase when Real Madrid won the tournament last year.

UEFA Champions League winner Paris St Germain has already qualified directly for the final scheduled for December 17, a week after CONCACAF Champions Cup winner Cruz Azul faces the CONMEBOL Copa Libertadores champion to reach a playoff.

Egyptian side Pyramids has already made the playoff, a de facto semifinal, by beating Saudi Arabia's Al-Ahli on Tuesday.

The playoff winner will face PSG in the final. —*PTI*

FULHAM BEATEN

Villa wins 1st Premier League of season

LONDON, 28 SEPT

Aston Villa won their first Premier League win of the season with a 3-1 comeback victory courtesy of goals from John McGinn and Emiliano Buendia early in the second half.

Fulham took the lead after three minutes through Raul Jimenez's header, but Ollie Watkins drew Villa level in the 37th minute with his long-awaited first goal of the season.

Early in the second half, Villa raced into a two-goal lead, firstly through McGinn's long-range strike before Buendia poked in a third goal in the 51st minute.

The win takes Villa out of the bottom three and onto six points, with Fulham's three-match winning streak coming to an end to leave them 10th.

Fulham took the lead after just three minutes when Jimenez ghosted in at the near post to head into the far corner after losing the run of Lamare Bogarde.

Jimenez was unfortunately taken off moments later after appearing to take a hit to the midriff during the build-up to the goal, with Adama Traore coming on.

The away side continued to be the better side, with Josh King booked for simulation for the second week running when he collided with Emiliano Martines when through on goal.

Fulham then had a shout for a penalty waved away when King's shot inside the box hit the hand of Matty Cash, but VAR deemed the right-back's hand to be in a natural position. —*PTI*